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The concept of social determinism as a motivating influence in some modern tragedy

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THE CONCEPT OF SOCIAL DETERMINISM AS A MOTIVATING INFLUENCE IN SOME MODERN TRAGEDY.

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Introduction.

"Art knows the true ideal of our times, and tends towards it."
-- Tolstoy.

The term, "social determinism", is a rather unfortunate designation for the absolute conditioning of human character by the aggregate of biologic and social influences. In the first place, the term suggests a philosophy or doctrine that probably does not exist, at least as an ideational entity. This idea which for the sake of convenience we shall call a 'philosophy' is simply the general inference to which science points. For such inference the term 'philosophy' is, strictly speaking, a misnomer because it implies a doctrinal circumscription for this idea that does not nor cannot exist. In the second place, the expression, "social determinism", is somewhat inadequate since the biologic factor in the deterministic equation is only implicitly given. Again it is necessary to plead convenience. There is no unit expression which would properly convey the concept of biologic and social determinism, and to employ both terms in the designation would perforce be to assign a priority to one or the other factor, a procedure which would surely entangle us in an issue

as absurd as that of the hen and the egg. But the fact that the social organism operates a priori in influencing the character of unborn generations and a posteriori in inducing environmental modifications has seemed sufficient reason for applying the term, "social determinism", to this universal process.

The central idea of this positivistic interpretation is that man, along with all other organic things, is the product of hereditary accidence and environmental contacts, that his psychic and physical constitutions (if there be such differentiation) are fashioned to the minutest detail by circumstance, and that his thoughts and the chemic impulses of his nature appear precisely according to his character which he has no hand in making. It squarely refutes the historic gospel of the individual which made man the proverbial master of his fate, a "free moral agent" to go right or wrong, to act morally or imorally, to be intelligent and civilly upstanding or to be stupid and depraved as he chose. The idea of a will in the sense of a detached faculty, a sort of quasi-divine organ not established by causation but possessed as a sort of peculiar perogative by virtue of being human,

is completely archaicized by this scientific statement. According to the deterministic understanding of nature, every human ideal and every human action appears in orderly relationship to causation, and each individual life is the only life possible under the circumstances. There are no alternatives of action; there are no human judgments in actuality, for man acts not in conformity with a discretion which he may direct, but in conformity with his character -- the summa summarum of his genetic legacy and his social experience. A pompous and romantic being in the traditional interpretation, man becomes by the deterministic explanation a mere insignificant link in an endless chain of organic phenomena.

A more definitive statement of this concept can scarcely be made with accuracy. This idea which, it will be shown, has been vitally influential in modifying the form and objective of the tragedy, has evolved with modern science. Its procreator is the Zeitgeist -- the spiritistic embodiment of those predilections and ideas which, without specific progenitor, emanate from the more enlightened stratum of the social consciousness and eventually suffuse the whole social

atmosphere. The ideal is a product of contemporary enlightenment, and though it is perhaps less widely understood and accepted, it bears the signs of the times quite as veraciously as did the romanticism of Shakespeare or the radicalism of Shelley. Liberty will herein be assumed to characterize this ideal as the "modern" view. It is the same liberty one assumes when he speaks of our contemporary civilization as "scientific". Present society is not so far as an arithmetical plurality of opinion goes scientific. Neither does the concept of social determinism reflect the attitude of the majority of people regarding the extraction, capacities, and responsibilities of man. But often tendencies are more significant than states. And the fact that the tragedy, always sensitive to movements of the social consciousness, has incorporated this rationale of life as its unit idea, is cogent evidence that it is truly a new direction in human thinking.

Like all the more comprehensive surges of human thought, this new concept belongs to an age or a culture and not to an individual or a "school" as has been too generally assumed. This error, if unfortunate, is not unnatural. Many writers of drama

and other forms of literature as well have practically reduced the scientific inference of social determinism to the proportions of doctrinairism. This has created the impression that this concept represents the caprice of a dramatic or philosophic clique. It is often urged with a naive seriousness that the naturalism movement in the modern drama was the origin and buoyancy of all positivistic thinking, that the scientific concept of social determinism inhered in the works of Hauptmann, Gorky, Zola, etc. Even so respectable a critic as Lewisohn appears to have committed himself to this error, when in speaking of the decline of naturalism as an art tendency, he implies the concomitant decadence of causation as an explanation of character. In his "The Modern Drama" he says: "Positivism not only fought an impossible dogma; it denied the possibility of any philosophic interpretation of the sum of things." How, unless through a deficient sense of relationships, he should have found so unnecessary an evaluation pertinent to essay, is hard to see. This and similar blunders may fairly be esteemed as the consequence of a conventional mind disciplined to canonical ideas essaying judgment of an art that is animate and protean, sensitive

to every phenomenon and accurate in registering it. For such persons it would appear that only criticism of the historic is a safe venture; there one finds the culture of a people or an epoch duly synthesized, the religion, philosophy, and art properly adjudicated.

But Mr. Lewisohn is not alone in his misconstruction. And because of the more or less general diffusion of this fallacy, it has seemed expedient in this project further to explain the true relationship of the deterministic idealism to the new tragedy by fixing the philosophic identity of some of those dramatists whose formal professions of faith do not always harmonize with the buried thought in their works. Such tragedians as Gorky or Tchekoff offer no problem. They are determinists avowedly and artistically. But dramatists of the Ibsen type are apt to cloy the mind of the reader who seeks an equity of meanings at all times.

Ibsen who fathered the deterministic drama had as his principal theme the will, and his sublimest injunction to humanity was to seek a freer, richer future through absolute obedience to this will. His greatest protagonists were wretched, as he thought, because they had been false to themselves. "Will

that which you are absolutely impelled to will", he pleaded with a thrilling earnestness. But his characters speak more cogently and illuminatingly of their author than Ibsen did. And Helene and Oswald Alving, Dr. Rank, Little Hedwig, Dr. Stockman and a score of others belie the statement that Ibsen was untouched by the mechanistic view of the world. His plays which to the undiscerning are purely volitional, are, in fact, almost surcharged with the atmosphere of determinism; circumstance is piled on circumstance and human character is torn and buffetted by influences so mysterious and uncontrollable, that we are almost compelled to the conclusion that this universe, if a controlled and directed one, is unspeakably cruel, or, if an accidental one, is tragic beyond all human comprehension. In the face of this deterministic world in which his greatest tragedies are enacted, Ibsen's bustling declarations about the will are just so much empty talk.

Likewise with Brieux. Though stoutly denying the naturalists' assumption that heredity and environment positively determine man's destiny, he dedicated his life to a diffusion of that social intelligence which alone, he thought, would dispel misery-breeding superstition, repress animality of

character, and in general relieve the tension of a neurotic society. And while thus professing to reject a world wherein the individual will was not supreme, he nevertheless went for his inspiration to the neglected, diseased, and oppressed of the human family -- society's fourth estate -- who by reason of a blighting heredity, their own imposed ignorance, and the bestiality and gross egotism of their oppressors, were precluded from a free and intelligent existence. And the remedy which he submitted, far from being moral or religious cliches, was, in fact, simply a composite of the deductions of the newer social sciences, an abstract of scientific principles for the genetic improvement of society.

We might multiply examples. There exists an abundance of evidence to support the supposition that a number of other dramatists were influenced by the scientific thinking of the hour. Their conscious aim may have been, and doubtless in many cases was, to create self-sufficient characters, and to attribute their atrophy of conscience, degeneration of moral fibre, and ultimate destruction to corruption by themselves of their "heaven-descended wills". But all the

dramatic artifices which they have used and all the oratory they have delivered have not served to create the sensation of tremendous personal fatality. Perfidy and waywardness of human character are exposed with such fidelity and luridness that we are almost chilled at the spectacle; vanity and fatuousness are portrayed in all their toxic ugliness; selfishness, egotism, and the moronic appetite for persecution are incarnated again and again in the protagonists of those poets who avow conservative ideas, yet we have had no Richards nor Macbeths, no villains in truth, nor any heroes. Moreover, there are few pictures in this cosmoramic reel of grossness which suggest to the catholic mind an interpretation according to any ethical or moral ideal whatsoever. The Mrs. Erlynnes, Paula Tanquerays, and Nikitas of this repertoire were not conceived in ethics, and to attempt any sort of ethical judgment of them, were, in effect, to try the moral probity of nature. The old code of responsibility is an anachronism. For all this obtuseness of spirit and all the infamy apparently so willful there are countless mitigating circumstances -- circumstances back of and responsible for all this perversion. From dramatists

professing to believe in the inherent capacity of the individual to transcend malign circumstance, we learn of a boy born to a life of crime and paranoia as the result of the sexual looseness of his father, of an explorer for the truth who was frustrated by a murky and hostile world, of a good woman hounded to her grave by the puritanic society in which she lived, of a philanthropist and humanist for whom calumny and ridicule were the reward, of a woman prostituting her honor in a Christlike charity only to be scourged to an ignominious suicide for her trouble, and of many others for whose earthly strivings there was no earthly recompense.

How is this? What is the paradox? This puzzling behavior of professing one thing and expressing another would appear to be the problem of the psychologist. Perhaps it was a case of subconscious espousal of a philosophy or outlook which was intolerable to the illiberal, insular consciousness of many modern writers. Or perhaps the scientific tenor of the new tragedy is the consequence of an "unconscious imitation" of the prevailing intellectual habits of the period. For these stereotypic suggestions no

validity is claimed and no apology is offered. Concerning the mechanics by which new and heterodoxical ideas found their way into the art of professed social and moral puritans, nothing is here advanced. We shall in this thesis be concerned solely with external phenomena -- with demonstrating the presence of deterministic inclinations in the form and in the objective of the modern tragedy. The project in hand, accordingly, involves an examination, in the form of an objectively analytic study of plots, characters, and circumstances, of one or more plays from each of a group of the most representative of modern tragedians. What, it is hoped, we will get from such examination is a composite of individually diversified reactions, yet convergent -- in short a kaleidoscopic picture of the ideas of a number of writers, le toute ensemble of which seems to be the expression of a new social consciousness regarding the nature of man.

Henrik Ibsen.

"To live -- is to war with fiends
That infest the brain and the heart;
To write -- is to summon one's self,
And play the judge's part."
-- Ibsen.

The justice of the general assignment of preeminence to Henrik Ibsen in the modern tragedy is beyond cavil. Yet for the student of origins, the great body of contemporary criticism throws little light upon the Norwegian's first claim to preeminence. In fact, the revolutionary concept of the individual, to which the new tragedy owes in a great measure its existence, has never received any very serious consideration from the critics. In acclaiming Ibsen the premier artist of the new movement, they have been activated only by his excellence in the new art. He has, however, another, if less readily apparent, certainly no less substantial, claim to distinction. This reason, for which in a study of development no marquetry of general characteristics of the author can substitute, is that he supplied a fundamental idea for the building of this new tragedy. It was in his plays that the concept which gave the art a new motif, became first articulate. In his "The Changing Drama", Henderson, in discussing the unit tendencies of thought which

have motivated the great drama of the world, says: "From the doctrine of evolution, Ibsen imports into the drama a new unit idea; the idea that the individual is the creature of the historical moment, of social environment, of physical heredity." This transference and transvaluation of the evolutionary theory, while neither refuted nor verified by any express utterance of Ibsen, is well authenticated by circumstantial evidence. And the evidence of corroborative circumstances is much more enlightening when dealing with Ibsen than his doctrinaire assertions concerning his beliefs. Like so many other geniuses, his true self is manifest only in his works. A single play or even a single character may negate whole reams of his detached philosophizing. It is this fact that many reviewers evidently have not seen; they have sought to fit his plays to his formal enunciations instead of vice versa. As a consequence, they have given us some of as baroque critiques of Ibsenism as one could imagine. True, Ibsen may easily be misunderstood in places; but the sad truth is that these critics have not misinterpreted Ibsen at the points where confusion might be excusable. And this is not the rhetoric of an apologist trying to squeeze an

artistry into type. Let us look at a concrete case. The stress which Ibsen gave to the human will have in many instances, it appears, completely obscured to the reviewers the fact of the dramatist's philosophic positivism. They have ignored backgrounds, fundamental thought patterns, everything for this particularity. Thus, they have made Ibsen a better classicist in ideas than Shakespeare. Now Ibsen's emphasis upon the individual volition does not make him a moral classicist; it does not make him an exponent of retributive justice, or a believer in any universal moral scheme whatsoever. Ibsen was a determinist who saw a world in which nothing happens without a cause. His continual accentuation of the necessity for an adequate will and his insistence upon the obligation of all persons to give it reality in their lives was simply his eudemonistic theorizing from the premise of determinism. Were there no other evidence, this thought explains a state of mind and a consistent purpose that would otherwise have to go unexplained. But there is an abundance of concrete evidence of Ibsen's espousal of the mechanistic interpretation of life. It would be extremely difficult to cite one instance wherein Ibsen blamed a protagonist for his failure, yet numerous cases suggest themselves

in which the dramatist either implicitly or directly points to the source of the tragic action in uncontrollable circumstance. In proof of this we have "Ghosts", "A Doll's House", "Brand", "An Enemy of the People", "The Wild Duck", "Hedda Gabler" and others. Ibsen has said much about the will, but never has he said anything that would indicate even a passing respect for the ancient belief in personal self-sufficiency. Indeed, has he ever created a paraon such as Lear or Tamurlaine that we may dissociate from his circumnambient environment? And Ibsen was a subjectivist whose finest genius is seen in his delineation of character, in his portraitures of mental states, the conflicts and perturbations and compromises that continuously go on, deepening the hue and outline of individual temperament. The very most that can be said against his assumption of a will is that it was awkward terminology. And perhaps it was not even that. It makes no difference whether we believe that people act in accordance with a "will", the operation of which is definitely and completely predirected by forces external to itself, or whether we simply regard human action <u>per se</u>. Either position is thoroughly deterministic. In neither case is a

self-originating will, a directional or volitional potency unrelated to biologic and social stimuli recognized. One method of study would examine the character of resolutions, themselves preestablished by antecedent influences; the other approach to character study is through a thoroughly behavioristic analysis of action. Somewhere between the psycho-physical constitution of human beings and their behavior, Ibsen recognized a will. But at the same time he recognized the absolute domination of genetic heritage and social hereditament over this will. He saw a world scourged with degrading moralities -- moralities which were cheating people of the volitional legacy which rightly was theirs. He saw a society of noxious customs and institutions which could easily pervert all but the most vigorous of wills. It was in recognition of the absolutism of circumstance that Ibsen launched his series of tremendous social dramas, in which he sought to mitigate in a measure the cruelties of this social circumstance. His was not a defeatist philosophy which preaches a stoical acceptance of the inevitable, but it was a militant, constructive idealism for deflecting ill circumstances by destroying

the ideals and practices which propagate it.

It is not expected that this comment on the idealism of Ibsen will persuade any one to the conclusion that Ibsen was a determinist. It is offered only in anticipation that the objection may prematurely be raised against including Ibsen in the determinist category, and is advanced with the hope that it may temporarily quiet the objections that a study of the plays ought finally to overrule.

There is little in the early theatre of Ibsen that is significant so far as the idea of determinism is concerned. He began as a romanticist, drawing the majority of his themes from the past. His saga plays and the romances which followed them represent his artistic and philosophic apprenticeship, the period when he was orienting himself and integrating a fundamental outlook on life. Many of these early dramas are vigorous and stimulating; all of them attest to the amazing drive of their author, and all are pregnant with suggestions of the Ibsen that was to be. But to see Ibsen's determinism in its maturity, it is necessary to pass over the first era of his life to the second and his "modern dramas". It would be unnecessary

and unprofitable, even though space and time permitted, to search out all of the great plays of this later period. We are concerned not with studying Ibsenism in all of its complex ramifications, but in establishing his connection with one particular idea. And while all of his mature dramas exhibit in varying degrees of plainness his deterministic thinking, many of them were conceived to embody specific beliefs on social, domestic, or intellectual questions, and not to illustrate the theorem of social determinism. Accordingly we shall address our attention to four plays of Ibsen that seem most explicitly to indicate the author's ideas regarding the source, the potentialities and the limitations of human character. The first of these is "A Doll's House".

This play represents the author's recognition of the despotic influence of social environment upon human character. Here, in order to give his point concreteness, he has chosen a domestic situation. The Helmer household is an average Scandinavian home of the upper middle social class, ordered along strictly conventional lines and with womanly duty and the sanctity of the marital relationship among its

most revered ideals. Specifically, he shows how the institution of marriage and the idolatrous faith of many in its sacredness may stunt individual development to the end that a person potentially reasonable and resourceful becomes an ill-oriented, irresponsible child. The protagonist is Nora, light-hearted wife of Torvald Helmer. Nora represents the dynamic, the curious, the generational in social thought; her husband represents the static, the stagnant, the traditional. Eight years with this son of Philistia reduces Nora to a helpless child, or rather holds her at the adolescent spiritual level at which marriage had found her. In the pseudo-chivalric ideals of Torvald she had meekly acquiesed and had been his beautiful, fragile plaything. The resolution and judgment and spiritual virility that are hers by virtue of her heritage are completely repressed; and she drags through eight droughty years, unconscious of the fact that there is a more intelligent, more satisfying role in life which she might carry. An individualist by nature and with predilections for a rich egoism, she is reduced by domesticity to a complete nullity. The traditional ideas of marriage

and wife-hood which her environment instills smothers her real self, and as feeble compensation for the finer intellectual and emotional experiences her life is filled to exuberance with puerile interests, fascinations and loves. The super-lyric, ecstatic, virginal enthusiasms which were Nora, her false sense of propriety condemned to dormancy in the subconsciousness; in their place were only the ordinary concerns of a sort of half-motherhood. So thoroughly and so effectively are her fundamental cravings for self-expression suppressed that only by the trauma of a final domestic upheaval, do the more genuine adult qualities emerge and actuate Nora's life.

It is further significant of the deterministic spirit of "A Doll's House" that Ibsen created Doctor Rank, pathetic victim of heredity, as Nora's confidante. For Doctor Rank there is only one logical explanation: that he simply further illustrates the author's deterministic philosophy of life. His inclusion in the dramatis personae cannot otherwise be reasonably explained. His connection with the plot is insignificant, and it offers a trite coup d'theatre seldom found in Ibsen. Certainly there was no dramatic advantage in making him an hereditary decadent.

But he undoubtedly intensifies the spirit of circumstantial fatality. And in his relations with Nora we have a symbolic expression of natural determinism which is unsurpassed.

So far as the theme of determinism is concerned, the finale of "A Doll's House" is of little significance. Ibsen's agreement with the philosophy of determinism is made obvious in the first two acts which together constitute an exposition of the forces which paralyzed the character of the protagonist. But Ibsen was too much idealist to stop with a naturalistic projection, so he created a third act in which he causes his heroine to rise to a conquest of character and to realize the sham and emptiness of her life. But in thus injecting his idealism into his tragedy, he does no injury to his basic view of the individual. Nora in her splendid rebellion is still the product of causes; her inherent savoir vivre, which the whole action from the beginning suggests, is resurrected by circumstances -- circumstances which revealed the superficiality of Torvald's love and the selfishness and inhumanity of his ideals. Ibsen in his idealistic conclusion merely switches from a negative to a

positive consideration of circumstance. This last act admittedly, is not Ibsen the determinist, but Ibsen the ethical theorist; however, it is significant that he does not have Nora resurrect herself. The truth did not come spontaneously; it required causation in the form of a terrible disillusionment. So here as in many other places, Ibsen demonstrates the fact that determinism is not only compatible with,ideals, but it actually engenders them. It was in the matter of his idealism that Ibsen differed from many of his successors. Ibsen's positivism was the motivative energy of his plays and not the plays themselves. We can only guess what Hauptmann or Gorky would have done with "A Doll's House", but it is a safe guess that Nora would never have achieved her freedom. Where for many naturalists determinism was at times a source of despair, for Ibsen it was an emotive excitant which stimulated him to untiring social effort. Ibsen did not wish to show the hopelessness of the situation, but rather to provide the external stimulus which would actuate people to the greater things for which they have innate capacity. Recognizing the enormous influence of prevailing thought on the lives of men

and women, he deliberately set out to transform the social thinking of his country, to liberalize and humanize it.

The heaviness of the deterministic atmosphere in the Ibsen plays usually varies directly with the intensity of the author's interest in the problem which the play incorporates. That is, the more profound his aversion to the ideal which his play satirizes, the more pronounced is the spirit of natural fixation. In "Ghosts", Ibsen assails an ideal which he probably detested above all others: the conventional ideal of marriage. And in this play the sombre background of heredity and environment stands out more prominently than in any other of his works. Nowhere is there a story more barren of volition. Yet the characters are not puppets illustrating the mania of a doctrinaire; they are genuine men and women inextricably involved in a net of ruinous circumstances.

In "Ghosts" the coercive influence of both biologic heritage and social environment is shown, but the emphasis is upon the social side of the equation. Through the series of situations that he creates, Ibsen threads the central idea that slavery

to a mpral obsession operates directly and indirectly toward the final nullification of character: directly, by disintegrating the spiritual fibre of personality, by blunting the finer sensibilities and imprisoning the purest and most genuine of human impulses; indirectly, by fostering an ignorance and cruelty which breeds congenital dementia and fills the world with horribly misshapen lives. This moral obsession which constitutes Ibsen's environmental factor in "Ghosts" is the belief in the essential purity of the marriage state and the essential pruriency of any pre- or extra-connubial relationship whatsoever; it is the idea which sees legal marriage, even where it houses the most nauseating conditions, as infinitely more desirable than those relationships which, though beautiful and enduring, are made irregularly. This is the ideal which, represented by Pastor Manders, sends Helene Alving back to her physically and spiritually debauched husband, the morality that brings her again under "the yoke of duty and obedience". From the beginning Mrs. Alving's life is dominated by external circumstances. The circumstance of her husband's depravity and cruelty first cause her to run

away, then the circumstance of an old romance brings her to Manders, archpriest of conservatism and spokesman for conventional moral opinion, who then and there proceeds to obliterate the last trace of individuality in Mrs. Alving. The chain of circumstances is unbroken. She accepts his hard counsel and returns to her husband and to the life of misery and stupefaction.

The son that she bears is the figure of biologic determinism. Oswald is a syphilitic paranoiac whose career is charted from his birth. His mother early sends him away from the contaminated atmosphere of the Alving home, but she cannot separate him from the paternity of Captain Alving. So after a brief career a tyrannic heredity cuts him down. It is ironic that Ibsen made Oswald an admirable latitudinitarian in his social, religious, and moral outlook.

But Ibsen does not confine his determinism in "Ghosts" to his chief characters; it suffuses every nook and corner of the dramatic action. The seductions of Johanna and Regina and the inherent grossness of Engstrand serve to intensify the atmosphere of circumstantial absolutism.

The determinism in "Ghosts", though consummate

and depressing, is, as in "A Doll's House", bridled with idealism. But the idealism of "A Doll's House" is much more positive. At the very most, we can regard "Ghosts" only as a negative synthesis of the highest values, and it is probably less positive than that. But it offers one of the best examples in the modern repertoire of the philosophy of determinism subserving an idealistic purpose; it shows perhaps clearer than any other modern drama the manner in which the idea of social determinism has influenced the objective of the new art. Implicit in this naturalistic photograph of the derelicts of circumstance, there is an injunction to society to change these circumstances. And here is the keystone of the arch of Ibsenism, and the logical corollary to Darwinism. The philosophy does not engender a laudatory feeling; the determinist-dramatist does not see the benevolent circumstances which have made character, but the malign circumstances which have broken it. In "Ghosts" Ibsen inveighs against the circumstance of moral convention, but he does more. In this tragedy we see a larger protest -- a protest against the general principle of ordering human activities by moral patterns. And here again we see Ibsen the deterministic philosopher, the

raisoneur, demonstrating the preposterousness, the impossibility of moral dogma in a world in which physical law is absolute.

In technic as in text "Ghosts" is prototypic of the tragedy of determinism, illustrating clearly the effect of the ideal upon the architecture of the new drama. In form the tragedy approaches theatric naturalism. Its dramatis personae is on the whole somewhat above in the social scale those of the dramas of pure naturalism, and some of the most revolting situations are suggested rather than paraded. But in its minimization of plot, its eschewal of theatricisms, and in its realistic dialogue of fragment and idiom, "Ghosts" is essentially naturalism.

He who reads Ibsen from"Cataline" to "When We Dead Awaken", will encounter many thoughts, seemingly contradictory. Ibsen admits it and justifies it. He says that no man can think out a thought to the end without running into self-contradictions. But whether Ibsen was really inconsistent or consistent to a pattern of thinking too extensive for restricted criteria of interpretation, it may not with surety be said. But we do know that his attention often shifted

abruptly from one to another angle of a problem. As proof of this we have "The Wild Duck".

In "A Doll's House" and "Ghosts" we saw Ibsen the champion of a militant idealism, the spiritual missionary with a message of truth for an unregenerate world. In "The Wild Duck" we see him as the pessimist, the iconoclast hurling brands of satire against the self-constituted evangelist for truth and righteousness. In his former plays truth was extolled as the only thing that could bring freedom and happiness. In "The Wild Duck" the "demands of the ideal" are denounced as predatory of human peace and satisfaction. With a vitriolic iconoclasm Ibsen had assailed perjury and hypocrisy as enemies never to be compromised; now he condoned lies as essential to human happiness. The theme of this tragedy is the futility -- the cruelty -- of trying to form ideals for others. Formulae for truth when they are externalized and foisted on others become as tyrannous as institutions. We should not try to regenerate the other fellow; we cannot even hope to do more than regenerate ourselves. Regeneration must come from within. It is when we dissipate a simple soul's

illusions that he becomes miserable. Let him alone. Perhaps he has found truth for himself.

But what makes "The Wild Duck" most significant so far as we are concerned is that while Ibsen's idealism switched sharply, his determinism remains and suffuses the atmosphere of his tragedy from beginning to end. Heredity and environment both come in for account, but again, as in the plays previously considered, the factor of environment in the form of a destructive idealism takes precedence, the difference being that in these other tragedies it is error and falsehood that constitute the corrupting environment, whereas in "The Wild Duck" it is from a fetish for truth and enlightenment that the tragic action springs. The Ekdall household existing on deceits and misunderstandings lives contentedly until Gregers Werle comes presenting the "demands of the ideal". He forthwith punctures the delusions of the Ekdalls. He enlightens Hjalmar as to the real paternity of little Hedvig; he dissipates the monomaniac delusion of Hjalmar, and instills too deeply the ideal of sacrifice into Hedvig who kills herself in the play forest in the garret. All this is "to lay the foundations of a true marriage". To us the tragic imposition of an unintelligible

idealism upon a simple, extroverted folk completes a deterministic tragedy of surpassing quality.

The characters of this sombre drama are sufficiently mechanistic. Character is revealed in accurate sequence to causation, and each individual keeps within the narrow limits that a niggardly circumstance has prescribed. Old Ekdall is tricked into a felony and suffers a long prison sentence which ruins his life. Gina Ekdall by nature crass and simple is seduced by the elder Werle and afterwards pawned off to Hjalmar. Gregers Werle is in subjection to a missionary obsession which is the essential factor back of the tragedy. But of all the characters, Little Hedvig speaks loudest for Ibsen's determinism. A victim of heredity, little Hedvig goes blithely and happily on, ignorant that she comes each day nearer to the time when her congenital blindness will be complete. While the most brutally victimized character in the drama, she at the same time affords by her unquenchable optimism the only relief from the disgusting coarseness of the cast. Wiegand in his "The Modern Ibsen" indulges a fanciful interpretation of Hedvig in which he gives her a sort of moral victory

over life; moreover he says that the whole action suggests comedy. But if tragedy is in human defeat, it would require a supernatural perspicacity to find an element of comedy in "The Wild Duck". From beginning to end human destiny is ruled by physical accidence; not even in the end is there the assurance such as in "A Doll's House" that a larger future is in store. Gregers Werle, the idealist of the play, quits the stage in the end to destroy himself, since the world is such a chaos of lies that it is unendurable. As long as there is hope there must, in a deterministic world, be tragedy; because it is the very disparity between human ideals and aspirations and the eternal course of nature which is tragedy.

This clash of ethic scruple with nature is fully described in "Hedda Gabler". The determinism which drives the tragic action in this play is very subtle. There are no picturesque obstacles or inter-characteral antagonisms to be faced. The tragedy is of a distinctly subjective type. Hedda Gabler is an unconscionable egoist, but she is lost in her egoism. She has an intense longing for individuality, but she is unable to achieve it. Outwardly, she appears to have no respect for moral convention, yet she has not

the strength of character honestly to act the infidel that she is at heart. She is afraid of moral opinion. So she remains overtly loyal to her husband whom she almost loathes, the while compromising the conflict by a degrading inward adultery. Desperate for true self-hood, she finally seeks to test her will on another. She destroys him, but she exhausts herself in the senseless effort.

Hedda is an unfortunate mixture of free, wild nature and conventional inhibition. The world has played meanly with her, else she could have achieved the originality that she so much desired. She was born with no fear of people or timidity for their opinions; neither was she born to love cruelty. The latter proceeds from the former, and both are impositions of malignant circumstances. It is not her fault that she is deficient in emotionality or that she has an inverted sympathy. It is not her fault that she does not love Tesman, nor that she so strangely expresses her feelings by burning the "child" (manuscript) of Lovborg. Professor Barrett H. Clark says of Hedda Gabler that she is "a woman out of harmony with her surroundings." Professor Archibald Henderson refers to her "abnormalities of character

and temperament" as being due to "heredity and environmental influences." These comments succinctly tell the story. She is a being of an order from which there is no secession, a creature of determinism which moves on, not at all disturbed by man's judgment of man.

These plays should suggest the direction of Ibsen's thought. A consummate positivist and at the same time an ardent idealist, he shows that ethics has nothing to fear from positivism, that, in fact, the ethics inherent in nature are infinitely more beautiful and truthful than any moral values religion or philosophy have revealed. The arresting thing is that he should have so skillfully correlated physical fact and ideal. Not one of his successors has surpassed him, and none, perhaps, has equaled him in this respect. So masterfully has he interlaced his social and ethical idealizations with his objective expositions of fact, that the former seem to have been evolved naturally from circumstances rather than hatched in the brain of the dramatist. This was because Ibsen saw the fact of determinism in a different perspective; namely, as an increment to our knowledge of scientific fact which should bring about a commensurate enlargement of our social thought.

Thus it made him a futurist, content to work hard and suffer much for a slow progress toward the Arcadia of his ideal. His futurism is beautifully epitomized in him famous toast:

"To that which is to be;
To that which shall come."

Gerhart Hauptmann.

"Will, will! Don't say that to me.
I know better. You can will and will
and will a hundred times, and things
don't change."
-- From "The Reconciliation."

In the tragedies of Gerhart Hauptmann the drama of social determinism receives its most naturalistic expression. His acute consciousness was early stirred by the political injustice and economic oppression which were rife throughout the continent, and this combined with his scientific study and his rational manner of thought gave him a pronouncedly positivistic outlook. Henderson in his "The Changing Drama" tacitly sums up Hauptmann's acquiesence in the doctrine of the determinists. He writes: "An eager student of the newer scientific theories in their relation to the laws of human behavior and the phenomena of human society, Hauptmann soon became a convert to the doctrine of social determinism. Freedom of will was seen to be a delusion in the face of the overpowering influences of environment and inherited characteristics. The simple conception of individual responsibility gave place to a vaster and more

complicated conception of man as a creature subject to the fixed laws of social and biological heredity. In this conception, man is derivative, not creative. The individual hero vanishes forever from the seene; and the characters of the drama are the resultants of social and biological influences for which they are not individually responsible."

Hauptmann had an aesthetic nature, and poetry or sculpture, both of which engaged him superficially at one time, might finally have claimed him, except for the profound human sympathies which his early experiences had engendered and the rigorous positivism in which his youthful intellect had been disciplined. But these experiences had been too intense. Hauptmann, after seeing the poverty, misery, and degeneracy in the world, could never have satisfied himself leisurely to sit down and contemplate its virtues and beauties. His teachers had been Darwin, Marx, and Zola, and they had instilled a rationalism which only a scientific exposition of reality could gratify. The intellectual elite of Germany were in the last quarter of the 19th century being deeply influenced by Zola and the French

naturalists; there was a growing interest in science and a rapid disintegration of traditional religious and philosophic faiths. Hauptmann fell immediately in line with this cultural advance. He rejected completely the dualistic interpretation of nature, i.e. the construction which posits the existence of spirit and matter and sets the two against each other; and espoused a thoroughly materialistic and mechanical conception of the universe. The dualism of traditional religious and philosophic creeds, he saw to be without any empirical support whatever; moreover, and what was still more repulsive to the humanitarian Hauptmann, he saw this faith to be the object of the cruelest exploitation by selfish and unprincipled political and economic schemers. If the oppressed fourth estate of the human family could be kept pacified by the promise of an eternal happiness after death, there was little incentive to rebellion against the insufferable conditions of this world. Even better if they could be convinced that misery and trouble in this life carried a commensurate reward in the hereafter. The hypocrisy and mischief of this idealism which had kept people in subjection for so long was quite apparent to

Hauptmann. He saw man as essentially an animal, neither more nor less divine by virtue of his genus than any other animal; spirituality, he saw as simply the obverse of this natural truth and not as a thing of supernatural origins. He saw man as the product of his physical and social heredity, and quite as impotent to transcend these natural limits as the cankerworm or the hydra. He believed that man might alter physical circumstance or deflect it, but he cannot obviate it. With these convictions, Hauptmann set about to photograph the terror, the brutality, the wretchedness of the world, that society seeing the ugly side of life might be moved to beautify it.

Henderson has observed the fortunate coincidence of Hauptmann's rise to genius and the development of the free theatre movement in Germany. Had Hauptmann been denied the naturalistic medium of expression, the world would probably have been deprived of one of the finest geniuses that ever took up a pen. The Freie Buhne in Berlin opened in 1889, and the production in that year of Hauptmann's maiden dramatic effort, "Before Dawn", marks an historic episode in the story of the modern German drama. Hauptmann in devising a

form for his own purposes, actually created a distinctly new dramatic genre -- the drama of naturalism. But we may be sure that with Hauptmann it was a necessity dictated by his deterministic philosophy and not an innovation for its own sake. To achieve his purposes it was necessary for Hauptmann to go to the abused, the neglected, the disinherited of the world. He was compelled rigorously to exclude all idealizations, and to focus his attention on the commonplace and the contemporary. Conventionality must not only be ignored; it must be despised. So for all practical purposes, Hauptmann forgot that there were normal, happy, well-adjusted souls in the world, and betook himself to the alleyways of the social organization where the maimed, the distorted, the asymetric of the human creation exist, where crime, disease, and moral depravity nip character in the bud, and where hope and idealism are extinguished like a candle flame in a poisonous well. These conditions. Hauptmann saw and studied with an almost morbid accuracy; and his observations come from his pen with a naturalistic exactness and fidelity to fact and detail. His theme is the ugliness of the world, and in his search for it he is unrestricted by

himself. He has no divinities to uphold, no vested interests to protect; nothing is sacred, nothing is profane in his cinematographic projections of human actuality. His stage is the earth, and his dramatis personae its disinherited.

Of the four plays which most vividly reflect the author's determinism, "Before Dawn" may be first considered, since it was in this work that his positivism and the naturalistic apparel in which it was clothed, first appeared. In this tragedy, Hauptmann struck the note to which all his subsequent dramas were attuned. It is pure determinism in text and pure naturalism in form. Here, in strict compliance with his theory for social regeneration, he has turned his attention to the miserable and the wretched. A determinism that is almost fatalism broods over the action from the beginning to the end, catapaulting the characters to every move and finally destroying them. The Krause home is one of vice and degeneracy. Farmer Krause,made wealthy by a discovery of coal on his farm, spends his wealth in debauchery. His second wife is drunken and immoral, spending her time in clandestine affairs with the

hostler. Martha Hoffman, Krause's daughter by his first wife is a dipsomaniac. Her husband is a libertine. Their first child died at the age of three as a result of its alcoholic mania. The next was still-born. Into this nauseating household circumstance puts Helen Krause, daughter of Krause by his first marriage and sister of Martha. But Helen is a woman of fine character, having been educated away from home and the contaminating Krause household. Circumstance also brings Alfred Loth, young socialist and free thinker to the Krause home. Helen and Loth, both characters of the highest order and with similar ideals, are quickly drawn to each other. But the intense love which develops between the two is dissipated when Loth learns that dipsomania is supposed to inhere in the family. Helen escapes her terrible environment by suicide.

There is not a spark of volition in the tragedy. As Professor Chandler in his "Aspects of Modern Drama" observes, "Circumstance conquers will, and the victim dies crushed by the hand of fate." In no other tragedy by Hauptmann, with the exception of "Rose Bernd", are human souls so hopelessly in the

grasp of deadly circumstance. The destructive determinism in "Before Dawn" is a combination of biologic and social occurrence. An hereditary dipsomania claims two lives and irredeemably degrades two more. The environmental foulness of the Krause household and the fact of its corruption drives another to a wretchedness which forbids the "luxury" of suicide, and sends the protagonist proper to self-destruction. But the circumstances which Hauptmann weaves into the fabric of his tragedy are not fanciful, not mathematically trimmed to demonstrate a theory. Nothing could be more horribly objective than the delineations of character and episode which make up the drama. To have idealized the thing ever so slightly would have been appreciably to lessen the horror of it all. Had circumstance been depicted as grotesque and inconceivable, there could have been no sense of the tragic. It is the awful reality of the picture, the terrific credibility which the story holds, which gives the play its tragic import. And "Before Dawn" is characteristic of Hauptmann. He pits his men and women against insuperable odds -- against a social determinism -- which is infinitely more terrible than

the great supernal powers or the mystifying, half intelligible delusions against which the protagonist of other days strove. Beside the tragedies of Helen Loth and Rose Bernd, the fates of Prometheus and Othello are almost as calamities in fairy stories. The fatalistic tragedy of the Greeks and the individualized tragedy of the Rennaisance were romance; the deterministic tragedy of Hauptmann and his contemporaries is brutal reality.

In "The Weavers" Hauptmann illustrates again and powerfully the crushing pressure of social environment upon the lives of human beings. The dramatist here shows the utter despair and desperation to which people are driven by a despotic economic organization. Hauptmann's inspiration for his tragedy was the unsuccessful rebellion in 1844 of the Silesian weavers against the manufacturers, in which his paternal grandfather as a weaver had been involved. In his dedicatory note to his father, Hauptmann said: "You, dear father, know what feelings lead me to dedicate this work to you, and I am not called upon to analyze them here. Your stories of my grandfather, who in his young days sat at the loom, a poor weaver

like those here depicted, contained the germ of my drama. Whether it possesses the vigour of life or is rotten at the core, it is the best 'so poor a man as Hamlet is' can offer". Hauptmann uses this particular revolt to epitomize the whole great, universal struggle between capital and labor. It is preeminently naturalism of social environment.

In "The Weavers" all personality is lost; the protagonist is a mob, and the external obstacles against which it vainly strives is the socio-economic regime in general. Determinism is absolute. Some critics have thought that for a tragedy of naturalism and of determinism, "The Weavers" exhibits too much individual initiative, too much volition. Such idea springs from the rebellion. But the rebellion of the poor oppressed spinners cannot by any stretch of the imagination be seen as volitional. If there ever was a clear case of men being ~~catapaulted~~ goaded to action by external circumstances, the weavers' rebellion is this case. Their uprising against their taskmasters was not as the consequence of careful contemplation and deliberate willing; it was simply their unreasoned and desperate reaction to a social stimulus. Their

rebellion may be likened to the fight which a timid animal puts up when it is cornered and goaded. Circumstance is solely responsible for every move of the action from the beginning to the end of the tragedy. Hauptmann has never created a drama in which the social determinism was more complete or more tyrannical. Mental apprehension and physical exhaustion and the inspiring young Jaeger are the circumstances which eventuate the rebellion; superior resources of the manufacturers and their seduction of the political authority to their cause constitute the circumstances which crush it.

It would be easy to read a subdued social criticism into "The Weavers". The tragedy invites such misinterpretation. But we must not, for we may be sure that Hauptmann had no such motive in mind. The tragedy mirrors a social situation, but it bears no propaganda. Rather it shows the hopelessness, the terrible futility of a proletarian revolt. The immitigable misery of the peasant toilers is drawn with naturalistic pungency and their drab failure with ironic stoicism. It would, of course, be idle to think that no idealism motivated "The Weavers". But it was

an idealism like that in "Strife" or in "An American Tragedy" which seeks its gratification not in proclaiming some panacean programme for reorganization, but in faithfully depicting the woes of the situation as it exists. There is no platonic patternism, no suggestion of the ideal; but a masterfully executed picture of the social consequences of capitalistic economy. The tragedy is typical of the author, and shows clearly the Hauptmannerian reaction to the idea of determinism. Hauptmann, like Ibsen and Galsworthy, likes to show the new roads which social ideals and institutions open up to determinism. In "The Weavers" it is the system of politico-economic pluralism; in "Rose Bernd" it is bestiality and puritanism. In all of his plays determinism is specified and in all it is total.

In "Drayman Henschel" Hauptmann is the impassive naturalist of "Before Dawn". So realistic is this drama, so veritistic is its representation of life that it moves slowly. Life in many places moves slowly -- and painfully. Determinism is the spring of what meagre action there is, and it is a malign determinism that throttles initiative and saps drive.

Drayman Henschel is the protagonist who succumbs to his environment. His promise to his dying wife that he would not marry the hired girl is broken. Hanne Schal who becomes Mrs. Henschel is gross and immoral. She virtually destroys the Henschel household. Through neglect of Henschel's child by his first wife, she causes its death. Henschel is tortured by his broken promise; and, though a strong man who is invincible to physical enemy, he is tragically helpless in the face of an abstraction. He escapes his torturing obsession by suicide.

Social environment is the deterministic impetus which unravels this tragedy and pushes it to a denoument. Social heredity perhaps would be a more exact designation in this instance, for it is social heritage which moulds each character to its ultimate proportions. Drayman Henschel's defeat was written when he married Hanne Schal; little Gustel's death is directly traceable to Hanne's neglect; Berthel's sordid past and her inevitable future are her mother's doings; the first Mrs. Henschel was hurried to her grave by worry and by gross neglect on the part of her husband and the housekeeper; and the fates of Walther,

Franziska Wermelskirch, and Hauffe are sealed by their social hereditament. No character in "Drayman Henschel" ever approaches individualism in the ordinary meaning of the term; there are no idealists, no surging impulses for a faster grip on life or a deeper understanging of its mysteries; not one character from the protagonist to the nameless Fireman ever sees over the brink of his Silesian microcosm, nor can we suppose that he wishes to. Rather we feel that a recalcitrant circumstance has worked so early and so effectively that all the finer passions of human nature have been completely snuffed. Defeat is not spiritual as in "Before Dawn" or in "Hedda Gabler", but strictly physical. But defeat, whether it be a frustration of sublime or ignoble aims, is tragedy; and in the annulment by circumstance of the Henschels with all their crassitudes and perversions, we have a human tragedy in bold type.

In "Rose Bernd" Hauptmann achieves his most consummate drama of determinism and his noblest tragedy. If "The Weavers" was natural and "Before Dawn" naturalistic, "Rose Bernd" is nature. Never before has a dramatist succeeded so well in making

a tragedy appear to spring from nature itself. There is no reorganization or revaluation of values; there is no superimposition of human idealism or ethical interpretations upon this theme. The brutality and ugliness of the story are the brutality and ugliness of human nature. Here is a perfect piece of determinism in which the concepts of responsibility and guilt have no meaning. The characters are pushed to an inevitable destiny by an irresistible force that knows nothing of justice or injustice, right or wrong. Human idealism is the protagonist and inexorable nature the too great obstacle against which it strives. The theme of the tragedy is the seduction and ruin of Rose Bernd. Rose is a motherless girl, beautiful and high-minded. Her father, a starchily respectable puritan, would marry his daughter to a spineless nincompoop with an obsession for messianic holiness. With no protection from her anemic lover, Rose falls an easy victim to Flamm and Streckmann, the former a weakling unable to resist the girl's beauty, and the latter an oversexed brute who excuses his crimes as being provoked by the attitude of his fellows. Rose is ruined. When her child comes, she strangles it that it may never

have to endure the agonies of its mother.

No character of tragedy has ever been more brutally victimized by circumstance than was Rose Bernd. Surely she ought to have a prominent place in the fictive hall of fame along with Hester Prynne and Tess of the D'Ubervilles. Left motherless to struggle against the wiles of the world, Rose might even have succeeded had it not been for circumstances. There was the piety and rigorous puritan righteousness of her father and friends. Once Flamm had wheedled her into compromise and the sullen, unprincipled Streckmann had violated her, she was lost. There could be no redemption among a group of wolfish puritans. So Rose destroys her child to save it. When traditional goodness is thus affronted and an unpardonable crime committed, Rose becomes horribly ironic. And this is the most reassuring part of the tragedy. When with flaming eyes and malice in her voice she says, "I've strangled my child", she indicts the whole world -- the world that had cheated her, degraded her, and stolen her baby. The coldness, the intensity of this sentence thrills. The protagonist though too prostrate from her tortures to

rise, nevertheless faces her tormentors with an arrogance that is born only of suffering. And then we have her ironic evaluation of life, her curse for its stupidity, its cruelty, its bestiality: "It was not to live! I didn't want it to live! I didn't want it to suffer my agonies! It was to stay where it belonged!

Maxim Gorky.

"Life will always be miserable enough
to keep the desire of improvement
unextinguished in man."
-- Gorky.

No deterministic writer has drawn more depressing social pictures than Gorky. After wading through "The Lower Depths" and "The Smug Citizen" one is physically and spiritually fatigued; the slavic gloom that suffuses these tragedies is contagious, and unless the reader is immunized in religious or philosophic faith or is naively optimistic, he is apt to become sharply cynical. For a short while at least he will be unable to see the determining influences of the world in their proper perspective; they assume grotesque and malignant proportions, operating only to produce depravity and suffering; the concept of a universal justice yields to a concept of universal cruelty; nature seems no longer to exist for man's subjection and dominion, but man exists to be tormented by nature; plan and purpose are swallowed in undirected and catastrophic phenomena; idealism is a fetish; a stoic apathy is the desideratum for existence in such a world.

Fortunately this chaos does not last.

Sooner or later one realizes that back of these terribly impassive dramatizations there is an idealism. Gorky did not photograph the agonizing convulsions of humanity for the sake of the picture itself. In the back of this dour Russian intellect there is a deep, brooding concern for the welfare of human beings. It is true that in his most notable works Gorky has pictured man in the grip of a determinism almost fatalistic; but such pictures were created in the full consciousness that heredity and environment are not inflexible to the will of man, and with the ideal of meliorating from without conditions that could not be meliorated from within. Gorky's recent statement that "it is always good for one to see one's foe more powerful than he is in reality" probably helps to explain the almost classical odds against which he pits his characters. Doubtless realizing the lethargy and astigmatic vision of the average person, Gorky saw that subtle illustration of determinism could never suffice; the illustration would have to be concrete, remorseless. So by way of accentuating most powerfully the direful influences of hereditary proclivity and social circumstance, Gorky went for

his materials to the submerged tenth of society, to the centers of vice and degradation where individuality and creativeness are nullities, and where a seething mass of degenerates, crooks, and vice-mongers do not live but merely exist, some in anticipation of a day that never comes, others in apathetic resignment to their fate, and still more dully ignorant that the world is anywhere different. Intellectual and spiritual life in such atmosphere is impossible. Character is responsive only to the most pristine drives; sensuality grows enormously and is glutted. There is no ethics, only an underworld sub-justice which is ironically administered. Such is the scene of the Gorky tragedy. It is not a scene fanciful or far-removed, but one that we may find in any metropolitan area of the world to-day.

"The Lower Depths" (translated also as "The Night Refuge" and "The Night Shelter") is exemplary of the tragedy of Gorky. Here we have not a drama in the sense of plot and a definite thread of action, but simply a series of pictures of underworld characters. The scene of the tragedy is the subterranean lodging of Michael Kostilioff. Here are huddled human outcasts of every description -- perfect

types of mal-determinism, whose warped and dislocated natures are the direct result of circumstances external to themselves. Circumstance has degraded and ruined them and has finally driven them to this den to die. They are beyond reclamation. Luka, an old pilgrim, enters the Inferno with the idea of resurrecting the poor creatures, but only brings more misery to those who listen to him. The intrigue of Wassilissa Kostilioff and the murder of her husband and the suicide of the drunken actor are the only arresting episodes of this static tragedy.

Aside from the main story, Gorky's portraiture of types is illuminating so far as the thesis of determinism is interested. There is Andrew Mitritch Kleshtsch, the inherently depraved and brutal locksmith, his wife, a pitiable consumptive who is hastened to her death by her husband's brutality, a drunken prostitute who uses her earnings to support a fake baron, and other supernumeraries no less positivistically drawn.

"The Lower Depths" represents the most negative reaction to the fact of determinism. Not a ray of hope penetrates into this dingy hole of vice;

not one character, with the possible exception of the pilgrim Luka, exhibits the least idealism or the least faith or interest in life. The tragedy shows the laws of nature at their very worst; in the face of them Anna Kleshtsch is as impotent as Prometheus was before the "great, immense" Jove. No Odin, Thor, or Jupiter, however vindictive, could be a more terrific antagonist than the grim law of environment. No god of classical tragedy ever did a more complete job of defacing human character than natural circumstance does in "The Lower Depths". In the tragedy of tradition, the dramatist projecting his ideas into his work, created a struggle, sometimes an heroic one; but in the tragedy of determinism the arbitrary "conflict" of dramatechnics gives way to the biologic struggle for existence. In his essay "The Modern Drama" Gorky succinctly summarizes his ideas of tragedy, which, incidentally, represent a significant development in theory for which the determinist philosophy is responsible: "The characters of a drama should all act independently of the volition of the dramatist, in accordance with the law of their individual natures and social environment; they must follow the inspiration

of their own destiny, and not that of any other destiny arbitrarily imposed upon them by the writer. They must, driven by their own inner impulses, create the incidents and episodes -- tragic or comic -- and direct the course of the play, being permitted to act in harmony with their own contradictory natures, interests and passions. The author throughout should behave as a host at a party to which he has invited imaginary guests, without in any way interceding, no matter how one guest may worry or torment any other -- be it physically or morally; and finally it is his business to describe the manner in which they all behave." Obviously, such creed, if followed strictly, would give the composer a large order. But it is an ideal which may only by hard striving be approximated; Gorky himself confesses his inability to achieve this ideal in its entirety, though he probably comes as near to it as any one does. The ideal, though, is scientific and practicable, and if we accept the premise of social determinism, the logical point d'appui in the conception of a tragedy.

"The Smug Citizen" (also translated "The Middle Class") further reveals the influence of the

philosophy of determinism upon the thought and artistry of Gorky. This play, like "The Lower Depths" is an extremely naturalistic cinema of a little corner of human society. The dramatis personae of this tragedy are, however, somewhat elevated socially above those in "The Lower Depths", but they are almost as disagreeable. As in the drama previously considered, wrangling, chaotic and disordered conversation constitute the action. The protagonist is Tatiana, school-teacher daughter of Bezsemenov, the smug citizen. She is a character of high ideals and fine spirit, but like Helen Krause in "Before Dawn", is unable to transcend her destructive environment. It is for her that the disagreeable Bezsemenov home and the narrow, provincial life of the community are a tragedy. In this fetid atmosphere her ideals decay and crumble, and when her love is smashed and she of all the children is left in the house with her bigoted and pompous father and her pusillanimous mother, she disconsolately throws herself upon the keyboard of the

piano. The resounding discordance and the awful silence which follows peculiarily epitomizes Tatiana's life. The deterministic character of the tragedy is best indicated by the crushed Tatiana herself: "Nobody declares his love as they write of it in books.....and life throughout is not tragic. It flows softly, monotonously by, like a great muddy river, and while you watch it flowing, your eyes become wearied, your head becomes dull, and you do not even want to think what the stream is flowing for." And again: "Life crushes us without noise, without screams -- or tears -- and nobody notices it."

Those who decry the philosophy of the determinists point with immense satisfaction to artists of the Gorky type as living representations of the terrible consequences of positivism, not alone on the drama and art, but also on the vision of man. In the neo-romantic consciousness, Naturalism symbolises the horned beast of the apocalypse. The ideal back of such art is obscured to such an intellect. But as if successful refutation of naturalism as an art genre were a negligible task, some have even challenged the

utilitarian value of such work. M. Edouard Rod referred to naturalism as "the literary expression of an entire positivistic and materialistic movement which no longer answers any actual need". And this reference is quoted as authoritative by Lewisohn in his "The Modern Drama". The implication is, we may reasonably suppose, that the more complex and problematical our social organization becomes, the more our minds should be turned from the actual and the real and fixed upon the fanciful and the idyllic! But it would be extremely difficult to convince Gorky that romance is a more tonic gospel for a sick society than realism. For after all, naturalism and realism are the same thing. It all depends on the spiiritual and material status of the spectator. For the average student of literature, the picture of the Kostilioff lodging with its foulness and its degenerate patrons, is naturalism; but for Anna Kleshtsch who is a part of this underworld dross and who has smelled its stench and has suffered its brutalities, it is cold realism. And it is from Anna Kleshtsch's point of view that the

tragedy ought to be regarded. If the Gorky tragedy is dull, ugly, impassive, then it is true to the letter and spirit of nature; life in many places is ugly and static. If it is sometimes horrible, then it must be truly genuine, for the world is full of horrible situations, although many people never see them. It was with an idealistic desire to portray these ugly situations faithfully, and not with the aim of horrifying the reader, that Gorky wrote. His long labors in the interests of democracy and social sanity and his present tireless devotion of himself to the extension of popular education, belie any other interpretation of his work.

August Strindberg.

"And to the man with a programme, who wants to remedy the sad circumstance that the hawk eats the dove, and the flea eats the hawk, I have this question to put: Why should it be remedied?
-- Strindberg.

There were, in effect, two Strindbergs: Strindberg the naturalist and positivist, and Strindberg the mystic. His life in totality might be regarded as a progression from spiritual chaos to spiritual order. The first half, figuratively speaking, of the dramatist's career was one of intellectual and emotional confusion. He was a precocious individual and boundlessly energetic, and he had not gone far till he had critically examined and discarded most of the traditional faiths which are the support and equilibrator of the average mind. While in the university, he had studied Darwin, Nietzsche and other naturalistic philosophers, and he became an ultra-materialist, engaging every question with a characteristic skepticism. But his eschewal of religious and ethical orthodoxies and his espousal of the text and method of science did not bring about the

well-ordered, well-proportioned intellect of a Huxley or a Wells; he was temperamentally or emotionally a mystic who could not orient himself in a world of realities. No man ever struggled more tragically against reality than Strindberg. His intelligence, which was unusual, compelled him to accept the scientific interpretation of nature, but his mystic imagination was constantly searching for a hidden meaning in life, a higher, more universal purpose which life should serve. In his pitiable maladjustment he became a neurotic misogynist and at one time barely escaped dementia. Finally in the last years of his life he succeeded in ordering and orienting his mind. Ideals that to his younger intellect had been sophistry and illusion became with his spiritual renascence a source of comfort and inspiration, and ideas that had once seemed so essential, he now regarded as insidious and corrosive of sound faith and clear vision. A Swedenborgian Protestantism supplanted his old agnosticism. Darwinism which had been responsible for his emperical construction of things and which had been the mainspring of his greatest work, he

derided as "a veterinary philosophy and animal science", and charged it with responsibility for his "somewhat decivilized nature", which he sought to "tame" by a study of the Bible.

Strindberg's intellectual metamorphosis, although not germane to the thesis, is mentioned in acknowledgement of the fact that he was not always the inflexible positivist of "The Father" or "Miss Julia". The dramatist's conversion to mysticism is, after all, though of little moment. The fact remains that for the greater part of his life he was in the grip of material monism and that he did his most distinguished work while professing the ideals of the determinists. Even after his assumption of speculative idealism as the true life, Strindberg still recognized the absolutism of natural law in the natural sphere; in fact, it was in recognition of the stubborn inexorableness of nature and the cruelty and apparent purposelessness of the circumstances which it procreates, that he sought authoritative revelation and peace through religion. As evidence of this assertion we have Strindberg's own unequivocal

declaration in his "Speeches to the Swedish Nation", where in the chapter entitled "Religion" in which he discusses his own faith, he concludes: "For only through religion, or the hope of something better, and the recognition of the innermost meaning of life as that of an ordeal, a school, or perhaps a penitentiary, will it be possible to bear the burden of life with sufficient resignation." So even in his later state of "rock-firm certitude" wherein we are given to believe he glimpsed that esoteric realm of higher values and realities, he still accepted the determinism of the physical world. He had not repudiated the objective world of causes and effects, but had simply turned aside; from a fruitless searching for "external harmony" he had turned to a search for "internal harmony" of the soul. Bjorkman in his preface to "Plays by August Strindberg" sums up Strindberg's new outlook, in the statement that "He was still a realist in so far as faithfulness to life was concerned, but the reality for which he had now begun to strive was spiritual rather than material."

The three tragedies which of the vast

Strindberg repertoire seem best to exemplify the mood and outlook of the author are "The Father, "Miss Julia", and "The Link". Of these plays the first two were written before the author's "recovery" and the latter one afterward. They are all, however, equally deterministic and all evince the tremendous influence of Darwin and the positivists on the thinking and the art of the "terrible Swede". "The Father", generally regarded as one of his greatest tragedies, if not his greatest, is an expression of his misogynic obsession. It represents the author's conception of the sex duel which was his interpretation of what is generally thought to be love. The woman characteristically is the tyrant. An old cavalry captain, intelligent and free-thinking, has for twenty years been engaged in a spiritual duel with his wife. Their child has held them together; but when the time comes to consider the daughter's education, the long struggle is climaxed. The father would send her to a free-thinker for tutelage, while the conservative mother would train her child at home. By filling her husband's mind with doubts as to his paternity to

Bertha, and by diabolical scheming and suggestion, Laura succeeds actually in deranging the Captain's mind. The management of the child thus legally devolves upon the wife, so Laura is free to train Bertha as she will. Fast in his strait-jacket, the Captain raves maniacally against all women, against his mother who bore him against her will, against his sister who dominated him as a child, against the first woman he loved who diseased him, against his daughter who has distrusted him, and against his wife who has finally destroyed him.

The determinism of this gloomy tragedy speaks for itself. The protagonist from the beginning to the end is in the clutches of dire circumstance. The woman is the supreme master, and her rule completes a kakokcratic despotism on a domestic scale. Before her satanic ingenuity the Captain is helpless; she moulds his destiny to her own diabolical ends, and then torments him in his helplessness. And apparently to emphasize the idea of this sex determinism, Strindberg apprises us that the Captain from the very beginning of his life has been a victim of women. But Strindberg

is a true determinist who does not forget that even the oppressor, the tormentor, the destroyer acts in harmony with a great cosmic determinism which is beyond the power of man to transcend. The Captain in his delirium reminds us of this fact, and his lines are a fitting conclusion to a great tragedy of determinism. When Laura has taken his hand in mock friendship, he lets fall from a mass of lunatical irrelevancies the following significant reminder and query: "Laura, when you were young, and we walked in the birchwoods, with the oxlips and the thrushes.....glorious, glorious! Think how beautiful life was, and what it is now. You did not wish to have it so, and neither did I, and yet it happened. Who, then, rules over life?" Laura's trite reply that "God alone rules.." brings forth the sardonic rejoinder that it is "The God of Strife, then! Or perhaps the goddess nowadays."

The determinism of "Miss Julia" is no less pronounced. In this masterful tragedy, the situation is reversed; the woman is the protagonist and is crushed by the tyranny of sexual passion. The play represents another perspective of

Strindberg's philosophy that the sex urge is a fearsome determinism, a will o' the wisp that promises delights and happiness but leads people to misery and death. Miss Julia is a lady of the nobility who has been reared by her feminist mother to despise men. She is selfish, aristocratic, and dictatorial with men, dismissing her titled suitor because he refused to allow her to horsewhip him as a diversion. But while her reasoned hatred for men suffices at most times to immunize her from the love passion, there are moments, "now and then", when the sex drive overrides the established inhibitions. It was in such a moment that Julia virtually seduced her lackey over his protestations and brought ruin to herself. After her indiscretion, the protagonist's will and poise are gone. From being the dominant, commanding party to the intrigue, she becomes the helpless and confused mistress of her manservant, begging for assistance and direction. Jean, however, gains confidence by his conquest, and becomes suddenly haughty and brutal. He taunts her with her fall and derides her somewhat dubious ancestry

that had been the buoyancy of her pride. Seeing no absolution for her shame nor any hope of escaping the despotism of libidinous passion, Julia, after reviling the male sex in terms almost unspeakably revolting, proceeds to kill herself.

Ignoring the symbolic allusions to social development that the tragedy holds, and simply viewing the action as it passes, we find that "Miss Julia" is one of the most seductive pieces of deterministic writing in the scope of the new tragedy. The chief characters throughout the drama are enmeshed in a net of tragic circumstances beyond human power to evade. Strindberg, himself, in his "Preface" to the tragedy best describes the fatal determinism which destroys Miss Julia: "In explanation of Miss Julia's sad fate I have suggested many factors: her mother's fundamental instincts; her father's mistaken upbringing of the girl; her own nature, and the suggestive influence of her fiance on a weak and degenerate brain; furthermore, and more directly: the festive mood of the Midsummer Eve; the absence of her father; her physical condition; her

preoccupation with the animals; the excitation of the dance; the dusk of the night; the strongly aphrodisiacal influence of the flowers; and lastly the chance forcing the two of them together in a secluded room, to which must be added the aggressiv-ness of the excited man." And subsequently in his preface he again refers to Julia as "a victim of the discord which a mother's 'crime' produces in a family, and also a victim of the day's delusions, of the circumstances, of her defective constitution -- all of which may be held equivalent to the old-fashioned fate or universal law." Thus the author explains the idealism back of his drama, the interpretation which he gives to nature and the mysterious phenomenon called life. Circumstance, to Strindberg, is not something which influences life; it makes life. Character is the consequence of the interaction of biologic and social circum-stances. In the combination of these circumstances we have a fate as fundamentally inexorable as nature. Julia, like Hedda Gabler and Tatiana, is a perfect type of this natural fate. Not a single act of her tragic career is born of independent

resolution. Strindberg intensifies the spirit of determinism in his drama by having Julia realize the futility of human ideals in the face of natural caprice or universal law. In one sense Julia's tragedy is typical of the inevitable clash between human idealizations -- the social, religious, and moral reaction patterns, most of which are artificial -- and the fundamental biologic proclivities. Julia realizes that convention has been affronted, but she cannot understand the how or the why of her transgression. "What horrible power drew you to me?" she queries of Jean. But the answer is irrelevant. And in Julia's last hysterical attempt to analyze her fate we see again an esoteric soul pathetically puzzling over the explanation that physical sense submits: "Whose fault is it, this that has happened? My father's -- my mother's -- my own? My own? I haven't a thought that didn't come from my father; not a passion that didn't come from my mother; and now this last -- this about all human creatures being equal -- I got that from him, my fiance -- whom I call a scoundrel for that reason! How can it be my own fault?

Whose is the fault? ..." Then forgetting the reason for these actualities for their consequences: "What does it matter whose it is? For just the same I am the one who must bear the guilt and the results."

As a matching of mood and expression, "Miss Julia" deserves to rank among the first of the scientific dramas. So meticulously has Strindberg architectured his play to the ideational content that he has achieved a tragedy in which the traditional conflict quits its technical circumscription and becomes a conflict of reality -- between a <u>real</u> <u>woman</u> and a <u>real</u> <u>world</u>. The fateful determinants which propel the drama appear not as conventional properties devised by the writer, but as genuine forces springing from the scheme of nature; they are not deployed by Strindberg, but deploy themselves; they are merely the forces of an unfeeling nature which require not the least shifting or rearranging. Miss Julia is the protagonist, but she is not idealized into her tragic role; she is a real woman whom circumstance and not the author of the play destroy. Strindberg

squarely opposed meddling on the part of the author with the character and destiny of the persons. In his preface to "Miss Julia" he wrote: "I do not believe in simple characters on the stage. And the summary judgments of the authors upon men -- this one stupid, and that one brutal, this one jealous, and that one stingy -- should be challenged by the naturalists, who know the fertility of the soul complex, and who realize that "vice" has a reverse very much resembling virtue." There is no judgment of Miss Julia, no inferences in any direction. And if we grant the truth of naturalistic art, we must accept Miss Julia. If she is bad, if she is weak or undistinguished, or if she is an unfortunate conglomerate of vices, we cannot blame Strindberg; we must charge either the complex civilization of established opinion and inhibition or the eternal nature with which it clashes.

Strindberg's idea of love as a tyrannic determinism is further stated in "The Link". This is a tragedy of a man and a woman who are brutalized and degraded by marital union, yet who are hopelessly bound to each other by their

child. Their life together has been one long series of quarrels and spiteful recriminations. Finally in desperation they seek relief in the divorce court. But the decree is only a stupid order for a year's separation and an unsatisfactory disposition of the child. The actual status quo of their relationship is little changed: more quarrels, more hating, more worry about the material security and social respectability of the child. Both realize the hopelessness of it all. It is the Baron who in their final colloquy declares the true source of their tragedy: "Can you guess -- do you know against whom we have been fighting? You call him God, but I call him nature. And that was the master who egged us on to hate each other, just as he is egging people on to love each other. And now we are condemned to keep on tearing each other as long as a spark of life remains." And the Baroness realizes quite as fully the absolutism of nature and the impossibility of supernatural judgments or choices. In reply to her husband's charge that it is she who is responsible for their plight, she says: "Myself? But did I make myself?

Did I put evil tendencies, hatred, and wild passions into myself? No! And who was it that denied me the power and will to combat all those things? -- When I look at myself at this moment, I feel that I am to be pitied. Am I not?"

"There are Crimes and Crimes" and "Creditors" both exhibit the deterministic motivation and both deal with the tyranny conception of love, but are subtler expressions than those already considered. In "There are Crimes and Crimes" ironically termed 'a comedy' the love force incarnated in the coquette Henriette ruthlessly destroys the obstacles which impede its gratification. Through suggestion of the unprincipled Henriette, Maurice forgets his mistress whom he loves and wishes the life out of his beloved Marion. But such is the cruelty of nature. The philosophic Adolphe, from whom Maurice had taken Henriette, dispassionately expresses the tragic association of Maurice and the coquette: "Why, it was as if a plot had been laid by some invisible power, and as if they had been driven by guile into each other's arms ..... I wouldn't hesitate to pronounce a verdict of

"not guilty." And in his summary statement of Henriette's activities that "she had no intention whatever, but just followed the promptings of her nature", he tersely describes the determinant within which the tragedy moves.

"Creditors" narrates the exploits of a soulless egoist who destroys two husbands in her mad pursuit of selfish and ignoble ambitions. Her first husband, her superior in every respect, she has ridiculed as an idiot in one of her writings, yet all the while jealously admiring him and drawing her resources from him. The second husband, who has taught her and devitalized his own art for her success, on seeing her infidelity succumbs to the epilepsy occasioned by the strain of her demands upon his spiritual and physical passion. The play is an intense study in hatred and an arresting picture of the devastation that a mean-souled, venalistic character can make in charitable, unselfish lives. The play is positivistically conceived and executed, and quite in character with the author's ideals of life and theatric art.

Such is Strindberg, the determinist. Through his personal assertions and the dramatic situations that he has created he discloses the outlook of a thorough determinist. There is the determinist's frank recognition of a purposeless, logicless world; there is the naturalist's acceptance of the inevitable fact that, regardless of however much we might wish to romanticize them, men are, from the beginning to the end of their careers, pawns of chance, ~~catapaulted~~ moved to every fortune or misfortune by a universal nature which is neither good nor bad, friend nor enemy to man. It simply is. But his reaction to these observations is peculiar. Strindberg is the most natural of naturalists. By this it is meant that his ethical ideals were strictly in accord with nature. Evolution teaches the necessity of natural selection. Why fabricate an elaborate pattern of morality which is essentially contradictory to nature? In his preface to "Miss Julia", the dramatist reminds us that "there is no absolute evil." and pushing his idea further, he says: "That one family perishes is the fortune of another

family, which thereby gets a chance to rise. And the alteration of ascent and descent constitutes one of life's main charms, as fortune is solely determined by comparison." But there is one thing that stands in the way of realization of this Nietzschean ethics: feelings. Life for the most part is hard, for men through schooling in sentimental artificialities have acquired feelings which instinct and circumstance offend. Reflecting on this, the true source of tragedy, Strindberg writes: "But perhaps the time will arrive when we have become so developed, so enlightened, that we can remain indifferent before the spectacle of life which now seems so brutal, so cynical, so heartless; when we have closed up those lower, unreliable instruments of thought which we call feelings, and which have been rendered not only superfluous but harmful by the final growth of our reflective organs."

This extremely materialistic conclusion which would doubtless have been much softened by Strindberg in his later years, represents the

author's heroic effort to adjust moral values to the mechanical universe which Darwin and others had forced him to accept.

Eugene O'Neill.

"Truth in the theatre as in life,
is eternally difficult, just as
the easy is the everlasting lie."
-- O'Neill.

It is difficult, if not actually impossible, to estimate the true position and significance of ideas which time has not resolved into the more or less fixed categories of thought. Particularly is it difficult if these ideas suggest no common philosophic origin, no general underlying pattern of thinking. Such is the problem one faces in attempting to establish the philosophic identity of Eugene O'Neill. He is so contemporary, so physically and spiritually a part of the confusion of our own time that a critical accounting for the ideas which his work holds is an extremely precarious business. Some critics apparently have not recognized the delicacy of the task, and have criticized O'Neill with the same glibness and cocksureness with which they discuss Dickens. This is not to say that contemporary criticism is wholly tentative or worthless, but simply to recall that for the contemporary critic there are crevasses and ledges that time has not yet eroded,

and the going is not so safe or sure as for posterity. We have but to look at some of the enthusiastic critiques of present commentators to see this truth in bold type.

"Expressionism", the term most generally employed to denote O'Neill's medium, is a form so mechanically arbitrary and so vague in idea that all efforts to isolate its unit idea are foredoomed. Professor Dickinson recognized this fact, and in his analysis of O'Neill judiciously refrained from advancing any definitive statement of the idea. He would venture only to offer three characteristic factors of the expressionistic drama. He mentions racial atavism, or the prepotence of heredity and reversion to ancestral type, also the dualism of illusion and reality, and finally the superimposition of ethical and material systems upon natural phenomena. But if his statement of the basic factors of expressionism is in a general way accurate, his inferences from these general principles are deplorable. For while admitting that physical heredity and social environment are important considerations in the

expressionist philosophy, he states, apparently with much confidence, that O'Neill does not belong to the "frustration school of literature". "He lays on man the burdens and responsibilities and joys that belong to him" says this critic in discussing the O'Neill philosophy. But this is a mere assertion, unsupported either by logical reasoning or by concrete evidence, and as such cannot be considered conclusive. Professor Dickinson's definition of "frustration" philosophy as that "which identifies man's failures with great external forces, the wrath or indifference of the gods, the pressures of circumstance, the injustices of social organization" would indicate that he probably sees the scope of social determinism as much less comprehensive than it actually is. His understanding of the deterministic phenomena seems to be limited to those great and picturesque determinants which in fact constitute only an insignificant fraction of the universal force. The subtler trauma of nature which produce deterioration of the soul, he apparently does not see, else he could not so positively deny the determinism in O'Neill. It is this failure to envisage

a universal truth in its entirety, this refusal to admit a consistent causality back of and responsible for the invisible, un-measureable realities of the psychic -- the soul -- life, that has made the Dickinson causerie of the subjective drama, and particularly of the O'Neill tragedy, so insufficient.

Ignoring for the moment the credo of expressionism and all artistic or thought derivatives from it, and simply searching the works of O'Neill for a basic conception of things, a single and consistent philosophy threading his diverse creations into a varietal yet homogeneous pattern, we find a recognition of a uniform causation, and not some vague notion of moral competency, to be the fundamental basis of his ideas, the ceaseless spring of his idealism. This should not imply that O'Neill is necessarily a deterministic philosopher. He probably would vigorously deny the charge. He is not a philosopher at all when he is at his best. His purpose is not, if this reviewer understands his plays rightly, to demonstrate any system of logic; other and indubitably more human concerns engross

his attention. He is interested in human beings and in the way they encounter the world, in the clash of idealism and nature, and especially in the tragic decadence of the character whose spiritual vitality leads him to dream and aspire beyond the horizon of reality. O'Neill's is a dramatico-poetic consciousness which is much preoccupied with those inner realities which most people are seldom moved to contemplate, far more seldom to see. But in his most expressionistic moments when he is engaged in turning the soul of a character inside out that he may observe the emotional complex of his subject, he is sanely positivistic. His wizardly transformation of the objective into the subjective is not simply a legerdemain of speculative philosophy, but an intellectual achievement performed strictly within the limits of practical fact. Like Ibsen or Strindberg, O'Neill has not been limited by his positivism to a delineation of surfaces, but has pursued his investigation of natural causation into the inner realms of life. "The old 'naturalism' ..... no longer applies." he tells us in

his tribute to Strindberg, tendered at the opening of the Provincetown Playhouse in 1923. "It represents our father's daring aspirations toward self-recognition by holding the family kodak up to ill-nature; we have taken too many snapshots of each other in every graceless position. We have endured too much from the banality of surfaces."

Of the three plays by O'Neill which best represent this author's genius, "Beyond the Horizon" perhaps is his best work from the viewpoint of determinist thought, and it also is nicely characteristic of the unique artistry which develops an expressionistic portrait of the "behind-life" areas upon a plate of pure positivism. The tragedy traces the spiritual deterioration of three characters whom an inflexible fate threw into environments in which they did not belong. Andrew Mayo, his brother, Robert, and Ruth Atkins who becomes Robert's wife, are the three consituting the protagonist of the drama. The opening scene of the play is important for synoptic purposes. Here are seen Andrew and his brother in intimate conversation. In their interchange

of confidences we learn that Robert is the poet, the dreamer, the illusionist. Andrew is his brother's spiritual opposite; he is the "hard-headed" practicalist and realist. Robert's dreams are for the mystical adventures and conquests and beauties that lie out over the hills, "beyond the horizon". Andrew sees only immediate realities, and aspires to nothing more idealistic than domestic happiness and success on the farm. Robert's dreams are idyllic fancies which like the desert mirage seem perpetually to recede. Andrew's aims are material and realizable. Thus we have two clearly defined types of character. Let us see what circumstance does to them.

For Robert who has always been anemic, a three year's sea trip is planned which, it is calculated, will at once improve his health and satisfy his peculiar longing for ships and skies. Andrew is to stay and manage the farm, and incidentally marry Ruth Atkins, his perfect affinity. But such a solution is far too simple to satisfy the requirements of deterministic art. It is much too romantic, too ideal for any realism that

recognizes the free play of circumstance and the difficulty of logical programmes in a logic-less world. So in the eleventh hour before Robert's departure, a conspiracy of circumstances frustrates all plans. The circumstances of Robert's long voyage, its simultaneously suggested romance to which no soul however prosaic could be insensible, together with the suppressed excitement of the hour and the ministrations of tenderness which the occasion evokes co-operate suddenly to transform the unimaginative and earthy-souled Ruth and lover of Andy, into an ethereal spirited creature and worshipper of Robert. Then when Robert in intimate colloquy with Ruth wistfully narrates his childhood search for beauty, and tells of his early fancies, of the elves and fairies in which he came secretely to believe to escape the painful reality of an unimaginative home, Ruth is completely hypnotized. She proclaims her love to Robert and pleads with him not to leave. Robert who has privately loved Ruth as any lyric-souled person would love anything strong, healthy, beautiful, magnificently rationalizes that love

is the secret beyond every horizon, and that when he did not go, it came to him. He ardently confesses his devotion to Ruth and promises to stay. Andrew goes to sea.

Let us examine the denoument of this triangular tragedy for any traces of the philosophy which Professor Dickinson says "lays on man ... the responsibilities that belong to him." In the first place, what of Robert and Ruth? With the first intoxication of love gone, they settle down to domestic slavery. Circumstance has played each a mean trick. Robert realizes that he does not love Ruth, that what he has taken for the goal of his dreams was in reality only an expression of an infinitely larger aspiration. The lure of the horizon, which in the passion of love he had identified with Ruth, he finds to be even more distinct and imperative. An adverse environment has not changed his nature; he is still the mystic, the dreamer whose poetic imagination soars out beyond the narrow horizon that hems him in. Yet he is confined; he is shackled to the drudgery of farm work that he despises, while he yearns for the

mystery and adventure that lie out "over the hill, beyond the horizon". Ruth is equally misplaced. She does not love Robert, and because he is so deficient in what she regards as strength, she comes gradually to abhor him. Moreover, she had never loved him. Robert's poetic talk on the eve of the Sunda's sailing had never stirred Ruth, but only her most artificial sublimations. She was totally unprepared to meet the force of hypnotic suggestion and her subject spirit reacted pitifully with a garbled message of a love -- a love for Andy, of which these confessions of devotion were tragically vicarious expressions. She is miserable. Together they deteriorate. The picture is one of degeneracy and death. The farm goes to ruin. Father and Mother and the little daughter, Mary, die. Robert is dying with consumption. The last vestige of self-respect and love is gone.

But what of Andrew? We might suppose that of the three he would be the one with best chance to succeed. He was a practical-minded extravert who it appears might have adapted him-

self to whatever environment in which he might be placed. But five years "beyond the horizon" leave Andy much worse for the experience. Out in the world of romance and adventure he has remained smugly, determinedly localistic. The sea, sunsets, storms, foreign ports have bored him. Only industry, the stress of competition, and hard work have interested him. His commercial activities have noticeably blunted his sense of ethics; life to him is a game, a business in which within broad limits all holds are fair and the battle is to a finish. His cyclical successes and failures have tinged his view of life with an arrogance and cynicism that betray the force of his new environment. He is not happy. In the ultimate act he comes home financially broken to watch his brother die. The last scene is a sickening wrangle between Andrew and Ruth.

If we shall render "Beyond the Horizon" philosophically, there is only one admissible interpretation; absolute determinism. The tragedy reflects a world in which an eternal energy or determinism moves things without apparent feeling

or purpose, a world in which causation coordinates all movements and in which definitely compounded circumstances condition all life. Here is pure determinism. We start with three normal characters; not persons peculiarly sculptured to fit a certain tragic plot, but plain, ordinary people of the kind that we see every day. There is no tragic obstacle expressly erected by the dramatist to stall the protagonists. There is only inescapable determinism that goes on whether tragedians recognize it or not. In this play it is the determinism of environment. From the moment that Robert confesses his love for Ruth and promises to stay on the farm till the pathetic reunion of the brothers five years later, all three characters are in the grip of environments that devitalize physically and spiritually. Robert, a poet to his fingertips, is given a worn-out farm to run and a prosy woman for a companion and an inspiration. Andrew, vocationally dimensioned localist, is sent to sea to act the farce of wanderer and introvert. Ruth, parochial enthusiast for strong men and fine crops, is manacled to Robert, her ideal of insufficiency.

Against these demonic circumstances, the characters struggle heroically but uselessly. And herein we see the exemplification of one of the high points of O'Neill's idealism: that aspiration for those things above and beyond the sordid realities that environ life, even when such aspiration must inevitably result in defeat, is the only choice if one would really live; that a ceaseless striving for the unattainable and the subsequent defeat are the true tests of vitality. Tragic aspiration is the only alternative to the spiritual petrifaction which microscopic souls, sane and conservative, call success.

Thus we see the doctrine of bio-social determinism procreating a new idealism. O'Neill forced to recognize the absolutism of physical causation, has not tried to escape it or go around it, but has countered squarely with a speculative theory of action that somewhat dualistically opposes dreams and realities, or at least develops a multiplicity of realities sharply distinct in character. This ideal reverses the whole conception of success. The life of highest ideal value is that which though gnarled and dwarfed by

circumstance, continues to dream and fight, and which while it despises the world, clings to it doggedly as a medium for attaining those transcendental realities which are the only things that really count.

If there is even the suggestion of traditional ideas of self-hood in this tragedy, this reviewer has failed to detect it. From beginning to end circumstance is the dynamic which propels this drama; in no part of the action does any character ever assume the proportions of an independent, self-sufficient individual with complete mastery of fate; never once are we moved to expect decisions from the characters, nor do we ever think of Robert or of Andy or of Ruth in terms of personal strength or weakness, or check them up for responsibilities faced or shirked. They are ephemeral creatures of the universal scheme, unfinished products of the infinite forces that conspired to produce them. And all the minutae of critical philosophy and all the litany of the humanists cannot make them Othellos and Brutuses.

O'Neill is a supernaturalist. That is,

his ideas and art, while predicated upon natural fact and physical phenomenon, transcend the short limits which early naturalists in their zeal for scientific materiality established. He refers to the audacity of the pioneer naturalists in their struggle for self-recognition as "blague"; and insists that it is only through "some form of 'supernaturalism' that we may express to the theatre what we comprehend intuitively of that self-obsession which is the particular discount we moderns have to pay for the loan of life." "The Emperor Jones" probably illustrates most clearly O'Neill's remarkable ability to probe the inner emotionalities while at the same time keeping a sharp eye on objective fact. Professor Dickinson has observed that in "the strict sense the play is comedy", seemingly basing his conclusion upon the impressions that Jones is not "important", that we "never follow his fortunes with an individual sympathy" and that he is a "futile, half-contemptible figure" fit only to be cast in an ironical comedy. However, since the drama is specifically labeled by the author, and

since modern convention does not require of a protagonist that he be "important" or that he compel "sympathy" through his virtue of character or probity of aims, we are privileged here to take another view. In this view, "The Emperor Jones", as an epitome of the tragic struggle of the negro against his own pristine impulses and against the wiles and hypocrisies of modern civilization, is tragedy pure and simple. Moreover, it is a tragedy of determinism if one has ever been written.

With the possible exception of "The Hairy Ape", this play is the author's most expressionistic production. Here he veritably turns the soul of a character and of a race inside out and exhibits as empirically as a vivisectionist those deeper realities which the older naturalists in their bland enthusiasm for externalities could never show. The true protagonist of this play is the negro race. Brutus Jones is the concrete representation of this protagonist. In his short contact with civilization, Jones has acquired a few of the tricks and baits by which civilized men cheat each other. He has learned the economic

value of the "bluff" and is sufficient master of practical psychology to double-deal profitably. Also as pullman porter he has caught the spirit of the white man's morality -- the ethics which exacts a meticulously adjudged compensation for "little stealin'", but which fosters "big stealin'" as a legitimate route to wealth and power. But unfortunately for Jones, these duplicities and the cliches by which they are defended are not universally understood and accepted. As the "Emperor" of a tribe of West Indian negroes, Jones tries to work these snares of the white man and is destroyed in the attempt. For a short while, by big talk about his super-strength, he manages to exploit his ignorant subjects. But before long the tom-tom is heard beating the signal for a revolution. The Emperor tries to escape, but he cannot make it. The Little Formless Fears, which are a legacy of the Congo and the States, frustrate every attempt at retreat and he is swallowed up in the reverberations of the savage tom tom.

As a character of nature, Jones is expertly created. He is the very incarnation of

those two universal influences which eventuate all life: biologic heredity and social environment. First, he is a negro with whatever primordial instincts are prepotent in his makeup. Perhaps he would not be accepted by some modern psychology, but that is of little importance. The Crocodile God and the Congo Witch Doctor are terribly real to Jones; they are phantom fears of a heritage he cannot shake off. Secondly, he is a victim of modern civilization. The ways of modern men are hypocritical and treacherous. Jones learns them, but he attempts to practice them in a realm where nature prevails over artifice, and he is trapped.

It is impossible to recreate the motif of this play in a review. Like many of the plays of Strindberg, and to a lesser degree those of Wedekind, "The Emperor Jones" discloses a plane of reality which may not be comprehended through intellectual reasoning. The appeal is to the sensation, and a diversity of technical expedients and theatrical devices are necessary to make the play live. It is sufficient here to note that O'Neill succeeded eminently. But the critic does

not have these dramatechnic utilities, and is at a loss adequately to describe the remarkable technique which projects upon a screen of formalized philosophy, a picture which must be realized largely through the sensations and emotions. Such is the critic's problem with "The Emperor Jones".

"The Hairy Ape", subtitled "A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life", is an ironical study of modern industrial society. It pictures symbollically the desolation which thinking brings to the souls of those who bear the brunt of our commercial civilization, of those who "belong". The first scene of this drama is the stokehole of a transatlantic liner. Here we have a colorful picture of those servile masses who bear the burden of our moral and material economy. In external appearance these stokers are all very similar: grotesque figures of economic oppression, glowering, fearsome beasts, stooped from heavy toil to a Neanderthaloid stature. But there is one among them who is different, one whose curiosity has far outrun his ability to understand. This is Yank. Yank's environment has stimulated him to think and

vaguely to discriminate lies and truth. But he is perplexed. He cannot clearly differentiate the two. Of only one thing is he sure: that power is true. Power is the thing that moves the world, the thing that makes and builds. He is power; he "belongs". "I'm de t'ing in de coal dat makes it burn, I'm steam and oil for de engines; I'm de t'ing in noise dat makes you hear it." Thus he summarizes his best conception of truth. But this solution soon is insufficient. When Mildred who typifies the weak artificialities that "energy has won for itself in the spending" goes into the stokehole and swoons before the frightful scene, Yank is insane. He has reasoned wrongly. He "belongs" and she doesn't, but nevertheless she controls him. He is her slave, the puppet of a monstrous system that she commands. He has neither individuality nor freedom. By some mysterious process those disgusting weaklings symbolized by Mildred hold those who really "belong" in an iron grip. What is the answer? His radical friend, Long, urges him to stir up a proletarian war on those people who enslave the real men of the world.

But Yank sees justice only in crude immediacies. He disturbs a group of Broadway "marionettes" and is thrown in jail. While in jail he tries to "think through", but failing, breaks out. He discovers an I.W.W. local and is elated; but he is disappointed when on inquiry he finds that it operates with due respect for social institutions. He wanders deliriously, unable to shake off the enigma which encages him. At the zoo he faces an incarcerated gorilla. There is an instant ebullition of sympathy; to Yank's mind, a mutual understanding. He jimmies the cage door and releases the beast. The ape crushes him dead.

"The Hairy Ape" illustrates the determinism of environment. Yank is the figure of the toiling masses upon whom the burden of our civilization rests, the modern serfs who make and produce for a commercialism that in turn further exploits them. Wedded by social circumstance to proletarianism, they have no choice but to slave and toil. Unhappy is the man among them who develops a consciousness to ask why! Such is the plight of Yank.

Anton Tchekoff.

"To Masha, who, forgetful of her origin,
for some unknown reason is living in the world"
-- From "The Sea-Gull".

Tchekoff's position in the pantheon of deterministic art is well established. With one or two possible exceptions he undoubtedly stands as the most veracious interpreter of the Russian scene, and as one of the best loved artists of the modern period. His advent in Russian life and letters was timely. Timely, because in the late nineteen hundreds his people needed a kindly, tolerant realist to describe the weary monotone of their life. Tchekoff was this realist. From his earliest years he was inclined to view nature unflinchingly, to accept reality unqualifiedly. This is not to say that he was deficient in ideals or that he was mechanical and prosaic. He was not. His impressionable senses registered everything about him with undeviating precision, but a wistful humor equipped him to face hard realities before which a more obtuse soul might have succumbed. This subtle humor which pervades even his most tragic themes is doubtless related

to the fact that he was a medico with a vast experimental knowledge of the tragic and ridiculous subtleties which are so inextricably fused just beneath the surface of character, and particularly so of the Slav peasantry for whom he was physical minister and confidante. But if his close association with people "humanized" him, it also developed his insight and reason to a degree which enabled him quickly to see the underlying causes provocative of any action or ideal. In other words, his experience as physician developed a diagnostic and prognostic acumen that penetrated diseases of the soul as well as it did diseases of the body. Tchekoff acknowledged his debt to medical experience. "It seems to me that as a doctor I have described the sickness of the soul correctly", he once wrote. And again, "Only a doctor can know what value my knowledge of science has been to me".

Whatever else he may be, Tchekoff is preeminently a determinist. Although his drama abjures actions per se and concerns itself primarily with psychological motives and the psychological

consequences of such motives, there is visible behind all overt acts and thoughts (between which there is no real qualitative difference) of his characters a natural causation, inflexible and uniform, impartial and mechanical. This causation which precipitates the catastrophe in the Tchekoff tragedy is seldom revealed as an immense external circumstance; it is concealed in the innermost recesses of character. Inherent in the characters are the "germ-wise" impulses and proclivities which are the raw material of tragedy. Love, ambition, energy, qualities so essential to existence, all carry their tragic derivatives. They only await the interaction with a discouraging world. This "discouraging world" which Tchekoff saw as so potent in incubating the tragic germs in character is tacitly described by Marian Fell in her introduction to her translation of Tchekoff's plays: "The last few years of the nineteenth century were for Russia tinged with gloom and doubt. The high tide of vitality that had risen during the Turkish war ebbed in the early eighties, leaving behind it a dead

level of apathy which lasted until life was again quickened by the high interests of the Revolution. During these grey years the lonely country and stagnant provincial towns of Russia buried a peasantry which was enslaved by want and toil, and an educated upper class which was enslaved by idleness and tedium. Most of the "intellectuals", with no outlet for their energies, were content to forget their ennui in vodka and card-playing; only the more idealistic gasped for air in the stifling atmosphere, crying out in despair against life as they saw it, and looking forward with a pathetic hope to happiness for humanity in 'two or three hundred years'."

Such is the society which Tchekoff re-creates in his plays. To visualize it is to take a long step toward an understanding of the author's view of life which is implicit in his art. It ought fully to explain his pessimism and the gloom which pervades his work. It would be extremely difficult to be a romanticist in such an environment; impossible for a Slav. He has a nose for actuality, and that actuality has for a long time

been dire. Judged by human criteria of benevolence and malignity, the determinism that has propelled Russian life has been bad. Political absolutism, social disunity, and economic want have conspired to make Russian life a rather savorless experience. The whole civic and spiritual atmosphere has accentuated in the minds of the more intellectual the idea that life is a bungling, meaningless business. Tchekoff was compelled to this point of view. His plays testify that he found no satisfying scheme of things. Religious and supernatural definitions seem to have great validity where life is artificial; but in peasant Russia where one comes close to the facts of life, these ingeniously constructed plans and purposes are sophistry. What value in romancing man into a theological uniqueness? In Tchekoff's precinct a non-ethical nature was absolute. He saw men as earthy beings at the mercy of nature, as animals corraled by an illiberal determinism into mean quarters from which they are powerless to escape. For these "useless people" enslaved by circumstance of one sort or another, Tchekoff had an overwhelming pity. And

as an expression of this pity he described them, not as a preacher or idealist, but merely as a sympathetic realist who, if he could not share all their hopes, at least loved the beauty of their wistful lives.

Of the four plays by Tchekoff that have been selected for consideration in this review, "Ivanoff" may be examined first. This drama depicts a characteristic Russian type: slow, melancholy, hypo-resolute. Ivanoff's wife, a consumptive Jewess, had married out of her faith and had suffered proscription by her wealthy family. Ivanoff no longer cares for her, and in the face of the protestations of the family physician that such conduct will hasten his wife's death, he persists in his nightly visits to the home of a friend, drawn there by a fascination for Lebedieff's daughter, Sasha. Ivanoff's loneliness excites the pity of Sasha who confesses her love. Anna one day discovers the two in embrace, and in the ensuing quarrel, Ivanoff insultingly refers to his wife's race and brutally informs her that she is dying.

A year later, a widower now, Ivanoff is marrying Sasha. But he is tormented by thoughts of Anna, and on his second wedding day, pleads with Sasha to terminate the engagement. When everything is in readiness for the ceremony, Lvoff, the doctor who had nursed Anna appears on the scene to arraign Ivanoff before his fiancee. In the bickering and confusion which follows, Ivanoff, announcing that his youth is again awake and that he can settle the whole affair, rushes aside and shoots himself.

Ivanoff is the figure of human weakness. He has no will, no moral courage to act the life that he believes to be right. He is lonely and miserable, yet he cannot definitely take the step to revitalize himself. A faithful husband he cannot be; it is biologically and spiritually impossible for him to love Anna; yet it is quite as impossible for him to espouse Sasha, since ethical proprieties are so deeply rooted in his character. In his monologue which follows his colloquy with Lebedieff, Ivanoff, himself, best describes the irresolution that ruins him: "I am a worthless miserable man ..... Good God! How I loathe

myself! How bitterly I hate my voice, my hands, my thoughts, these clothes, each step I take! How ridiculous it is, how disgusting! Less than a year ago I was healthy and strong, full of pride and energy and enthusiasm. I worked with these hands here and my words could move the dullest man to tears. I could weep with sorrow and grow indignant at the sight of wrong. I could feel the glow of inspiration, and understand the beauty and romance of the silent nights which I used to watch through from evening until dawn, sitting at my work table and giving up my soul to dreams. I believed in a bright future then, and looked into it as trustfully as a child looks into its mother's eyes. And now, oh it is terrible! I am tired and without hope; I spend my days and nights in idleness; I have no control over my feet or brain. My estate is ruined, my woods are falling under the blows of the axe. My neglected land looks up at me as reproachfully as an orphan. I expect nothing, am sorry for nothing; my whole soul trembles at the thought of each new day. And what can I think of my treatment of Sarah? I promised her love and happiness forever;

I opened her eyes to the promise of a future such as she never dreamed of. She believed me, and though for five years I have seen her sinking under the weight of her sacrifices to me, and losing her strength in her struggles with her conscience, God knows that she has never given me one angry look, or uttered one word of reproach. What is the result? That I don't love her! Why? Is it possible? Can it be true? I can't understand. She is suffering; her days are numbered; yet I fly like a contemptible coward from her white face, her sunken chest, her pleading eyes. Oh I am ashamed, ashamed! Sasha, a young girl, is sorry for me in my misery. She confesses to me that she loves me; me, almost an old man! Whereupon I lose my head, and exalted as if by music, I yell: 'Hurrah for a new life and new happiness!' Next day I believe in this new life and happiness as little as I believe in my happiness at home. What is the matter with me? What is this pit I am wallowing in? What is this weakness? What does this nervousness come from? ..... I can't understand it; the easiest way out would be a bullet through the head."

The circumstances that determine the destiny of Ivanoff are hidden in his own character. But the circumstances that destroy Anna are largely those of the exterior world. In the first place her marriage to Ivanoff in violation of her religious faith brings family ostracism which hurts her terribly. Then her husband's unfeeling treatment of her makes her life sad and lonely, and hastens her death for which consumption is directly responsible. "I have begun to think, Doctor, that fate has cheated me." Thus in her conversation with her physician she abstractly expresses the determinism that rules her tragic life.

The other characters of the play are quite as materialistically conceived. Kosich, Avdotia, Nazarovna, Martha, George, Borkin, and the other guests who frequent the Lebedieff resort are pitiable figures; idleness and ennui are consuming them, and they exhaust their energies in vain efforts to escape the "immortal commonplaces of life". Their weariness of existence and skepticism of any life is peculiarly epitomized in Shabelski's toast to Sasha: "May you live as long

as possible in this life, but never be born again!"

In "Ivanoff" we had an incarnation of weakness in general. The protagonist is the very picture of mental and moral pusillanimity. In "The Sea-Gull" Tchekoff is more specific. Here the particular weakness of love is most vividly illustrated. Constantine Treplieff, a poetic character, is struggling toward authorship. But Nina Zarietchnaya, his sweetheart and aspirant for the stage, has been unsuccessful with his symbolic plays, and has forsaken him for Trigorin, famous author, whom she thinks will "make" her. Irina, Constantine's mother and an actress, also heartlessly ridicules her son for his "decadent rubbish" and his refusal to accept conventional modes of art. Constantine, repulsed in love and in art, becomes morbid. He crudely challenges his rival, Trigorin, to a duel, and bungles an attempt at suicide. He is a pitiful spectacle. Life seems to have whipped him. With the beginning of the fourth act, however, we see him in a measure rehabilitated. He has won substantial success with his writings and the road to a world renown is clear. But he cannot forget Nina whom he still

hopelessly loves. Meanwhile the unprincipled Trigorin has put Nina aside and has resumed an old friendship with Irina, Constantine's mother.

One night, after having been in the community for some days, Nina comes stealthily to Constantine. Her unfaithful Trigorin and Irina are having dinner in an adjoining room. The lonely Nina pours out her soul to Constantine. Her child by Trigorin is dead. Her inspiration is gone; her spirit is broken. She is condemned by circumstance to a life of dreary toil on the provincial stage. Constantine implores her to permit him to go away with her, but she refuses. She is a "wounded sea-gull" that goes out into the night alone. Constantine, in a chaos of despair, shoots himself.

It is a depressing story, yet it is beautiful. Only Tchekoff could have handled this tragic theme with such eminently aesthetic results. There is not a ray of hope in the play. An abortive determinism is the dynamic which moves the characters in their fates. Not a vestige of volition is to be found. Treplieff is kicked

through a gorge of sorrows and disappointments by circumstances which he cannot even see, far less control. First, he must inevitably suffer the penalty of the innovator, the price which the world exacts for refusing to think and move with the mob. So for a time his artistic capacities are suppressed by the juggernaut of conventionality. But after he has liberated himself and won an authorship in his own right, he is still the slave to a love -- a love insatiable and everlasting which, when it cannot fructify, destroys him.

Nina, likewise, must watch her most cherished hopes fade. Snubbed in her enthusiastic efforts with Constantine's art, she impetuously allies herself with Trigorin in the hope of expressing herself. Success never comes. "Men are born to different destinies.", she tells Trigorin, "Some dully drag a weary, useless life behind them, lost in the crowd, unhappy, while to one out of a million, as to you, for instance, comes a bright destiny full of interest and meaning. You are lucky." But Trigorin denies that his life is beautiful, insisting that he is slave to a

writing obsession that precludes the finer interests of living. Later in conversation with Irina, he denies all power of being. "I have no will of my own", he says simply, "I never had."

"The Three Sisters" is as dismal a study as Tchekoff ever created. It follows the fruitless efforts of Olga, Masha, and Irina, orphaned daughters of General Prosorov, to escape the tedium of their provincial surroundings. They have but one ambition: to go to Moscow, their childhood home, where they believe life exists in abundance. Day and night they dream of Moscow and bright days and ambitious living. Now there is no reason in the world, outside of their own static natures why they should not go immediately to the city of their dreams. But they never go. Instead, they unconsciously burrow deeper into provincial obscurity, growing each day more spiritually lachrymose and void. Olga, the eldest, yearns for marriage, but is marked by determinism for a weary career as an old maid teacher. Irina, the youngest, and a telegraph operator, engages herself to a baron whom she does not love, in the

hope of realizing her dreams for travel and life. But her hopes are smashed when her fiance is slain in a duel. The second sister, Masha, finds herself at the most romantic and idealistic period of her life married to an insufferable pedant whom as an adolescent she had admired, but whom she now loathes. Her boredom is relieved only by a secret companionship with an army officer twice her age. But when his regiment is transferred, he leaves her to her tiresome professor who tediously tries to joke about his wife's infidelity.

Andry, brother of the sisters, is equally miserable. He has dreamed of a professorship in the university at Moscow, but instead gets a subordinate position in the local municipal government. He marries a petty, vulgar wife, and in a pitiful search for diversion, gambles away his own and his sisters' property.

Theatrically and spiritually the play is static. Not a move nor an idea disturbs the dead commonplace which is the life of the characters, nor is it once suggested that such a thing as individuality -- uniqueness of being and doing --

exists. The propulsive forces of the drama are extrinsic to the people themselves; they move in a maze without the slightest purpose or system by which to extricate themselves: they have no conception of the nature or objectives of an ideal existence, and are utterly unable abstractly to construct these logical elementals which are so necessary to a successfully directed life. The most philosophical of the cast, unable to grasp an existence of fact, denies it, and sees life only as a satanic illusion. The chief characters crave happiness, but they have no notion of what it is or of how or where it may be found. The speculative Vershinin's cryptic comment that "There can be no happiness for us, it only exists in our wishes" holds some immense thinking, but to the three sisters who have geographically isolated human happiness, this sage reminder is void. Pitiable children! Unable to reconstruct life even in its general contour, they yet strive for one of its most elusive effects.

The tragic futility of life is again Tchekoff's theme in "Uncle Vanya". Ivan Voitski

(Uncle Vanya) lives with his niece, Sonia, on the country estate that has belonged to her mother. To this estate comes Sonia's father, Alexander Serebrakoff, a fossilized old professor and his new bride, Helena, a charming girl in her twenties. The situation immediately grows disagreeable. Serebrakoff, ignorant of practical affairs, but avaricious and petty, proposes to the family that the estate to which he has fallen heir upon the death of his wife, be sold. This would mean the ousting of Sonia and her Uncle Vanya who have spent their energies in developing the place, all the while sending the profits to the professor. Voitski is enraged, so much so that he attempts unsuccessfully to kill her brother-in-law. In addition to his exasperation for the professor's ingratitude, he also suffers from a consuming jealousy, for he has discovered in Helena the woman of his dreams.

There enters another figure, Michael Astroff, a doctor of high character and considerable vision who has sacrificed his own ideals for a servile life as practitioner among peasant dullards.

Sonia loves him with all her life, but he cares nothing for her. He is drawn, however, to Helena, and she to him. But in obedience to cliches of duty and morality, she must remain overtly loyal to her dotard husband whom she loathes, a fidelity which Voitski brands as "false and unnatural, root and branch."

Serebrakoff, frightened by Voitski's attack, is glad to leave with no further proposals of sale. And with him must go his sadly mismated wife who, by every tenet of nature, belongs to Astroff. But Astroff is philosophical. He feels that even a greater tragedy than their loss of each other has been averted. After half-jocularly chiding her for her "disquieting" character, and the disruption it has produced in the workaday routine of the people she has visited, he gives serious expression to his intuition: "I am joking of course, and yet I am strangely sure that had you stayed here we would have been overtaken by the most immense desolation. I would have gone to my ruin, and you -- you would not have prospered. So go! E finita la comedia!" Poor Sonia must

carry the weight of a double defeat; she must not only nurse her own heartaches, but those of her Uncle Vanya as well. But she is equal to the burden. She has all the immediate serenity of the stoic and in addition a magnificent faith in the final righteous adjustment of things. "We must live our lives", she tenderly tells her uncle. "We shall live through the long procession of days before us, and through the long evenings; we shall patiently bear the trials that fate imposes upon us; we shall work for others without rest, both now and when we are old; and when our last hour comes we shall meet it humbly, and there beyond the grave, we shall say that we have suffered and wept, and our life was bitter, and God will have pity on us. Ah, then dear, dear Uncle, we shall ..... rest. We shall rest."

The infinite sorrow of life is the impression which this multilateral tragedy imparts. The entire action passes within the shade of a dull hopelessness. The characters are weak and realize their weakness; they move timorously from one sphere to another, obsessed rather with the

futility of life than with any substantial ideals for its accomplishment. Doctor Astroff in the beginning of the play voices the spirit in which the characters all move through the weary routine of living: "And then, existence is tedious, anyway; it is a senseless, dirty business, this life, and goes heavily." Sonia, alone, sees things more idealistically, and her faith is not in this life, but is fashioned around a post-mortal existence which is rest. The characters are acutely conscious of their nullity; each feels the heavy pressure of an inscrutable determinism, a mysterious force which shuffles things down the road to eternity seemingly with just enough intelligence and generosity to perpetuate life and -- tragedy. They work as ants work, from instinct and necessity, without any satisfying theories of compensation. On this subject the philosophic Astroff in reviewing his long years of unrewarded toil, raises a question for Marina, the old nurse: "Will our descendants two hundred years from now, for whom we are breaking the road, remember to give us a

kind word? And then his laconic answer: "No, nurse, they will forget."

Conclusion.

Critical selectivity rather than encyclopedic inclusiveness has been the ideal which has governed the introduction of evidence in this thesis, it being felt that the proposition must stand or fall with these few thoroughly representative tragedies. It has, in other words, been a qualitative and not a quantitative test by which the evidence *en masse* has been tried. But it would be a serious error to assume that the twenty-odd tragedies herein discussed constitute the body of the deterministic drama. Had circumstances permitted or necessity required, the list of significant dramatists whose works disclose expressly or suggestively the influence of deterministic philosophy might have been extended to a tedious length. Certain plays of Brieux, Suderman, Wedekind, Hervieu, Rice, Galsworthy, and Tolstoi might have been included in this dissertation, and with unquestionable propriety. In fact, they might well enough in certain instances have been used instead of authors considered. Such plays as Tolstoi's "The Power of Darkness", Brieux's "Damaged Goods",

Galsworthy's "Justice" or "The Fugitive", Suderman's "Die Hiemat", Wedekind's "The Dance of Death" and Rice's "The Adding Machine" are deterministic beyond cavil. But enough has been offered to establish the connection between the concept of determinism and the new tragedy. It now remains summarily to enumerate the more important consequences of scientific motivation in the art as a whole. The tragedy is and has always been our most deliberate and unsparing critic of life. Under the influence of science, its criticism and evaluation of life have been sharply changed. In the first place, they are no longer theologic; the modern tragedy makes its judgment of life unmindful of the religious and philosophic dogmas that so long obscured the facts. A purpose or scheme of life, were one evidently existent and comprehensible, would certainly lighten the task of criticism; but in the absence of any such palpable scheme or purpose, the modern tragedy has followed the wise counsel of Hume, and has committed to the flames as "sophistry and illusion" the great mass of divinity and philosophy which contained no

"experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence". It frankly faces life as a continuum of physical causes and effects with perpetuity as the only evident purpose. It sees a world moved by a determinism that is neither for man nor against him, neither good nor evil, but simply consistent. Life on earth is not regarded as an ordeal or trial in which to become purified for an Edenic existence after death. There is no conception of the glories of the hereafter to say nothing of the mundane life necessary to achieve them. But all is not obscurity. Science, although it has not just yet caught the elusive raison d'etre, has told us much about life. And while there are fewer accepted values in life to-day than in the omniscient past, they are probably truer ones. These values, the scientific drama in its youthful impetuosity has juggled and catalogued confidently, even recklessly.

Concerning the new ethics which the modern tragedy has developed from determinism, much might be said. But we may epitomize this new system of ethical opinion in the statement that the scientific drama has been concerned not so

much with formulating an ethic charter as with extracting the ethics which exist already in nature. On the subject of morals its mood has been ironic and revolutionary. Of all ethical mores it has been pronouncedly skeptical, remembering the observation of the old Greek philosopher that if one should heap all those customs and ideals somewhere regarded moral and sacred and then remove from the heap those customs somewhere considered wicked and impious, he would have nothing left. Lewisohn in his "The Modern Drama", among other objections to determinism, complains that positivism corrupts social character by destroying the mystic concepts of religion. "A merely positivistic and hence, despite all pretense, utilitarian ethics has never influenced mankind. An ethics without foundation in metaphysics or religion never will. We need a nobler mandate to secure our obedience." This critic seemingly has little faith in man's ability to absorb reason. He evidently has no conception of morality as intelligence, or of the moral efficacy of anything other than the pristine

fears and anticipations which arose in the undisciplined imagination of the primitive. But the tragedy's criticism of morality, like its criticism of so many other things, has been futuristic. It may well be that for a large element of humanity the self-imposed inhibitions of intelligence would be inadequate. But what is the price which we pay for the overt morality which our ideals enforce? The modern tragedy has illustrated vividly the fact, now apparent to the critical, that it is the implacable difference, the irreconcilliable disagreement between nature and the artificial moralities which men have devised that cause tragedy. The fluid variability of morality condemns it. And the modern tragedy looks toward the time when we shall have discovered the ethics which does not sterilize human nature, but which makes it yet a more luxuriant and beautiful form.

The changes in artistry which the deterministic philosophy has induced have been marked indeed. And this raises the perennially vexing question of what art is. Shall we speak truthfully of life, or shall we falsify? Is

realism or romance the disideratum? May a play which incorporates an idea be art? It is a broad and quite unresolvable issue, and we may dismiss it as a problem for personal whim. But determinism has further complicated the question by procreating a new art genre, naturalism, which is wholly unacceptable to many persons who grant the utility and artistry of what they call realism. Since naturalism is so significant a tendency in the modern movement in drama and since it is almost entirely the product of determinism, it appears worth while briefly to denote the objections raised against it and the premises upon which it validates itself.

With medieval illusions of dualism dispelled, the modern dramatist faces man as an animal, as a physical creature of circumstance, subject to the same natural causation that determines all other things. This new prospectus of man developed in the dramatist an acute social conscientiousness, an infinite pity for human beings with whom nature had dealt meanly. Old forms were inadequate for the expression of his

pity and his passion for social reform. So he presented life nakedly in all its squalor and pain. This form is challenged as gross, unaesthetic and without the vestige of true art. It is held to degrade rather than elevate, to spread apathy and weariness instead of energy and ideals. So the passionate idealizer, the romancer, sees determinism as the debaser of art, the toxin in modern thought. But determinism forces an alternative. The "limited" realist must perforce commit himself, if he would be consistent, to one of two general propositions: He must agree either that truth of the tangible, palpable sort ought to be the motif of art, or that it ought not to be. If the latter is true, then any idea or philosophy which seduces art to its purpose is bad; and art excels only in the degree that it succeeds in divorcing itself from truth. There can be no compromise, no toleration of truth up to limits arbitrarily imposed by convention; we cannot exclude only that reality which is offensive, but all reality; nature must cease to be the theme of art, and external reality must abdicate in favor of dreams and fancies. If this

is untrue, then the error is in consistency, and it is of consistency that the naturalists are convicted by the uncritical.

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